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HISTORY

OF THE

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

UNDER THE CONSTITUTION.

BY

JAMES SCHOULER.

VOL. V.

1847-1861.

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AUTHOR'S NOTICE.

THE present and concluding volume of this work has been based, like its predecessors, upon a diligent examination of all accessible material bearing upon the period described. The various authorities will be found cited in proper place; and among those whose personal suggestions have been of especial aid to me, acknowledgments are due to Hon. Robert C. Winthrop and Hon. Frederick W. Seward. Necessarily, in tracing out the leading influences of the epoch described, I have largely consulted the current newspapers and magazines, for there was no book to serve as a sure pilot; but in doing so I have endeavored to sift carefully the mass of testimony and reduce it to its true historical value.

Whether the pleasant labor of these many years be well or ill performed, I may claim without inordinate vanity that the first era of our national and independent existence has been traced out for the first time, and the long intervening chasm bridged from the Revolution to the Civil War, with historical painstaking, in the five volumes of the present work. Others may have undertaken the task, but they have not (so far as I am aware) performed it; nor have I profited in any way by their investigations, whether conducted before or after me. Something of careful, consecutive research for full three quarters of a century is required to bring the two grand revolutions of American annals into their fit correlation.

I now lay down the historical pen, not meaning to take it up again; though, if full vigor and opportunity were spared, I should be glad to add one more volume so as to bring the narrative to 1865; but the literature of the Civil War is already very great, and I am admonished, at my time of life, not to attempt to add to it. History is a tale never ended; and the narrator is wise who knows when he has reached his resting-place.

One point deserves to be impressed in this connection: that in confining ourselves to a particular era we should give to the men of that era no more and no less than their proportionate influence, however much they may have risen or sunk during the years next following. Thus Abraham Lincoln, "the good, great man," with

"— three firm friends more sure than day and night —
Himself, his Maker, and the angel Death,"

might be thought but imperfectly delineated in the present volume. But this is because it took the next four years' experience to bring out his splendid moral and intellectual fibre and tenacity of purpose, and to enroll him where he belonged, as the most conspicuous of his age if not of the century. He was not well appreciated, nor fully influential with the great body of our people, even after his election to the Presidency, which many thought more fortuitous than fortunate, nor until his administration began. There were other public leaders of the Free Soil movement, and notably Seward and Chase, who bore the brunt and swayed with the greater influence, before the Republican party gained the reins of power. So too were many others who figured but moderately in the period I have covered, in comparison with their later renown.

In parting from those whose kind words of encouragement have cheered my work from time to time, and from that unnamed constituency of readers to whom every author owes his best love and gratitude, I wish to say that, while conscious of imperfections, I have striven to be both fair and candid. Upon political judgments, more particularly, it is impossible that American citizens should all agree; but in these pages I have estimated men and events as one who viewed them from the standpoint of a later generation, and certainly after a more careful study than my compressed narrative might at first glance indicate.

J. S.

NORTH CONWAY, N. H., Sept. 8, 1891.

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HISTORY
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CHAPTER XVIII.

ADMINISTRATION OF JAMES K. POLK.

SECTION II.

THE MEXICAN WAR.

MAY, 1846—SEPTEMBER, 1847.

OUR attention now turns to the military narrative of the Mexican war,—a contest in which it may truly be said that the invading republic never lost a battle, nor made ¹⁸⁴⁶⁻⁴⁷ a serious military blunder, but bore the stars and stripes steadily forward from victory to victory. And yet we citizens of the superior republic were forced to own in the end that in this war, as in most others we ever undertook, the cost had not been prudently calculated. We had to admit that our enemy fought bravely and stubbornly, as patriots will fight to defend their native land; and the stern though futile effort of the Mexican people, under every disadvantage, to preserve intact their dominions could not but move the conquering invaders to respect and then pity them.

To the first miscarriage, politically speaking, of this unequal conflict of arms, we have adverted already: * that the glory of conquest redounded in the end, not to the

* See vol. iv. p. 541.

administration, nor to the party of Mexican dismemberment, but to their political opponents. True is it that of American citizen volunteers who enrolled for this war, nearly two thirds came from States south of Mason and Dixon's line,—Louisiana, Missouri, and Tennessee leading in numbers,—while the more populous New England States, New York, and Pennsylvania, were outstripped in zeal by Ohio and Illinois and the thinly populated north-western frontier, whose troops hastened by such transports as they could obtain down the broad Mississippi to join their Southern comrades at New Orleans, the general rendezvous of the American forces, thence seeking together the common field of fame.* True is it that Democratic colonels and generals fought bravely in the subordinate commands, many of them imbued deeply with the aggressive pro-slavery spirit of the times, and all intent upon adding new lustre to the army of the Great Republic. But accident and opportunity gave the chief military renown of the war to the Whigs. The two great commanders and victorious leaders, towards whom were drawn in succession the public attention and solicitude, were Whigs in politics, so far as they were politicians at all,—Zachary Taylor and Winfield Scott. Each of these men proved fully competent to his responsibility in spite of provoking obstacles. Each enlisted that profound gratitude of the American nation, which success in the profession of arms will best secure so long as wars are found essential. The administration of a Democratic President, balked in every effort to create a commander of its own party hue, could do nothing, as the war developed, but turn from the one hero to the other, in deference to a public sentiment it dared not disregard, hoping that each would destroy the other's prestige.

All roads to American eminence lead to the Presidency. In honest Zachary Taylor the Mexican war raised up eventually a Presidential candidate of irresistible strength with the people, under whose standard Polk's

* For statistics see 74 Niles, 193. The total number of volunteers in the Mexican war is here stated at 65,349.

party was driven ignominiously from power. Scott, less successful in winning honors of which popular suffrage was the criterion, it entrenched securely as the chief soldier of his time in America; and when, some thirteen years after this war, designs of Southern domination, such as bred this Mexican conquest, had worked out their full mischief to this republic in threatened disunion, his name and fame gave to the national cause incalculable strength in the first dark days of peril.

Two distinguished commanders of kindred polities, natives of America, born in the same illustrious mother State, and serving as soldiers under the same stars and stripes, could hardly have been more unlike in personal traits and military methods. Winfield Scott was the outranking officer, being already commander-in-chief of our army at the time when war was declared; and he has given himself full credit in his late memoirs for concurring in the detail of Taylor, a subordinate officer, to command at Corpus Christi when matters became critical with Mexico.* Zachary Taylor was at that time a brigadier-general by brevet, but in lineal rank no more than a colonel. Entering at early manhood into the military service of the United States, among the regulars, he had won gradual renown as a brave, efficient, and trustworthy officer; and yet his record was by no means distinguished. Once he had sturdily repelled the Indian chief Tecumseh while in command of a frontier fort at the northwest; but that same war of 1812 brought him no such conspicuous laurels as those of Chippewa and Lundy's Lane to the gallant Scott; while his long record in the ensuing years of peace showed nothing more memorable than sharing with others of our generals in the baffled pursuit of the Florida Seminoles. Yet of these two Virginians, so unequal in distinction when Texas entered the American Union, Taylor was somewhat the older, being at the outbreak of the Mexican war, in fact, full sixty-one years of age, though of sound health

* Scott's Autobiography, c. 26.

still, and a rugged constitution. Scott appreciated this, as well as Taylor's somewhat rigid disregard of forms. Accordingly, when detailing him to command on the Mexican frontier, the commander took care to provide him, unsolicited, with a staff officer of modest manners, his exact complement; * for he knew Taylor (as he says) to be slow of thought, hesitating in speech, and unused to the pen. To this admirable combination of general and chief of staff he ascribes, with no little pique and very scant justice, the train of good military fortune which followed.† Taylor's bright star, brighter than his own while it lasted, was indeed one of the sorest tribulations to which our autocrat of the regular army had to school himself; for Winfield Scott, with all his noble and estimable traits, was of a vain and irritable disposition, such as could brook no rival; and unfortunately too he had been long in training for President. Scott aspired to be first in war and in peace besides. In military honors he well deserved supremacy; for he was prompt, far-reaching, and skilful, of consummate experience both in the bureau and field, thorough, fearless, and self-confident in fight, a master of the complicated details of moving and managing, as armies in those days were moved and managed. He had, moreover, a wide range of acquaintance with our army officers of every rank, and with America's most eminent statesmen besides. But the jealousy and imperious temper of Scott's nature were fostered by long military habits in a high and even the highest grade. As he had quarrelled all the way up the line of promotion, with Generals Wilkinson and Gaines, with Andrew Jackson, with DeWitt Clinton, with John Quincy Adams, — so while he remained of pre-eminent rank in this new war, except for the President himself, he continued to quarrel to his manifest disadvantage, being rarely in personal sympathy with the administration. He was of impatient spirit, arbitrary, overbearing; though not always without reasonable cause for vexation and irritability. All

* Captain (afterwards Lieutenant-Colonel) Bliss.

† 2 Scott's Autobiography, 383.

this placed Scott in strong contrast with Taylor, who was beloved by all who served under him, for unaffected simplicity and kindness of heart, and took little interest in political rivalries. Once made known to the country, the latter struck strongly the popular chord. Taylor's age won respect; and when advanced age was once perceived to be perfectly consistent with valor, strong judgment, and excellent sense, none who knew him or who served under him could envy greatly his quick advance to illustrious honors. Scott himself was too generous-hearted not to accord to this veteran warrior, who had grown gray in the modest performance of duty, that true basis of a great character, pure, uncorrupted morals, combined with indomitable courage and a high purpose,—at the same time that with envious ridicule he disparaged Taylor's moderate learning and converse with the social world, in comparison with his own, and deduced rigidity of ideas as the logical consequence.* But Taylor, if ignorant for one of his exalted rank in some respects, had that good gift of common sense and sagacity, and that sympathetic tenderness of heart, for which learning alone is no substitute. And hence, of two able generals developed by the Mexican war, equally sincere and patriotic, the one built up formidable barriers to his own ambition, while the other, with scarce an obstacle in his path, attained the highest reward his countrymen could bestow, and when dying left behind no personal enemy in the world.

In personal appearance these warriors bore no resemblance. Taylor was of a moderate figure, inclining to corpulence. He had no manly beauty in his countenance; but his features, swarthy and weather-beaten, though homely in repose, would relax with a reassuring smile, which kindled from the eye and was wholly genuine; his whole aspect when animated was intelligent, benevolent, and full of good humor. But Scott towered in any crowd, distinguished by his handsome and leonine face and proud bearing; he was the very personification

* 2 Scott's Autobiography, 383.

of an illustrious soldier. His pictures showed him as he preferred to sit for a portrait, wearing the full insignia of his exalted rank, suitable for parade, while those of Taylor arrayed him rather in fatigue cap and modest undress; for while the one loved pomp and ceremony, and relied upon plumes and epaulets to add to his impressive effect, the other dressed only for comfort, and had nothing of the coxcomb or martinet in his composition. He, in fact, was as incorrigible in simplicity as his superior officer was in parade; and the contrast of the two chieftains on this point afforded their junior officers much amusement. Taylor, so the story ran in camp, never put on full uniform but twice in the whole Mexican war, both being unfortunate occasions,—on one of which the flag officer of the naval squadron and he reversed their usual habits of dress to accommodate the prejudices of one another, and met for a prearranged interview with embarrassing apologies.* On the field of action "Old Zack," as the soldiers liked to call him, rarely wore anything to indicate his rank, or even that he was an officer at all; all his men, however, knew him well. His retinue made no display. But Scott, whose soubriquet was "Fuss and Feathers," wore, from cockade to spur, the full regulation uniform on all occasions of form, and expected to be honored by the army in return. At the seat of war, whenever he inspected his lines his intention was announced in advance, and he would appear punctually on the hour, mounted on his charger and splendidly dressed, with his staff officers equipped to correspond and riding behind him in their proper order,—as many of them as he could spare for the occasion. The whole body of troops, with officers posted each in his proper place of rank, was drawn up to salute the chief as he rode by with his retinue, sitting erect and magnificent in his saddle, his superb figure set off by sword, gilt buttons, epaulets, and a black chapeau with waving feathers,—a commander indeed, and almost a conqueror by the force of his imposing presence. Scott

* 1 U. S. Grant's Memoirs, 101.

in repose bore no little resemblance to a lion or to some huge mastiff.

In battle, too, as may well be inferred, the methods of these heroes were quite different. Both were fearless; but Taylor's exposure of his person to danger, his courage in assuming oppressive responsibilities was something wonderful. Where the iron hail fell thickest he would ride hither and thither surveying the scene calmly and giving in person the needful orders; or he would sit sidewise upon his horse, "Old Whitey," as though the animal were a sofa, so as to get a good range for his glass. Nervous volunteers and recruits who had never been under fire were inspired by the old man's presence, as he thus identified himself with his troops; for Taylor always looked upon the fight through his own eyes, using staff-officers or dispensing with them as the turn of action might require. Scott, on the other hand, while exacting the most scrupulous respect and deference to himself, aimed constantly to give each officer in return who served under him the just allowance of duty and chance for distinguished gallantry according to his rank; and acting by rule he would move the whole machine forward with system and precision. He used more than Taylor did the eyes of his staff officers, and knowing his own importance, avoided personal exposure. Instead of giving orders on the spur of the moment, to meet the aspect of each fresh emergency, he prepared his plans deliberately and sent his written orders about, careful compositions, with an ostentatious pride that history should say that what he wrote down he accomplished. He had a literary style of his own in official reports, pungent, positive, and not without the marks of scholarship; while Taylor's despatches were brief and pithy like a Spartan's, and in spite of Scott's slurs, it is probable that he composed them. Taylor's methods, in a word, were unique and picturesque, fitted for striking some great blow and winning at odds a battle that would turn the scale, while Scott's comprehended the operations of a whole war. Scott, in fine, was looked up to and trusted with good reason; he had his kind side,

but he ruled by force and discipline. He had, moreover, his blind side, for he was vain-glorious, fond of flattery, and jealous outside of his profession; while Taylor's more amiable ambition and even his obstinate whims endeared him to all who served under him; he cared tenderly for his men as men, and they loved him tenderly in return.

Army nicknames do not compass the epitome of character, but they hit the nail somewhere; and so was it with the contrasting titles we have hinted at, "Rough and Ready," and "Fuss and Feathers." The point of each epithet was obvious, but of course it did the latter hero injustice, as with any other ruler who does not rule by sympathy. A young subaltern of this war, whose military star was at no late day to outshine these conspicuous luminaries by reason of exploits on a scale far more tremendous, has left in his own memoirs a just conception of the contrast these commanders presented in the field. His record may be trusted, for he served under both Scott and Taylor. "With their opposite characteristics," he writes, "both were great and successful soldiers; both were true, patriotic, and upright in all their dealings."*

The first good fortune of the Mexican war went to Taylor, the subordinate in rank, who better won the public gratitude which through life he never forfeited. The bright planet of a war is that which rises first, can it but hold its course through the clouds of danger and hostile rivalry that gather over it; for to this turns the fullest confidence of a people while imagination is warm and the hope of victory buoyant. Taylor did not disappoint, but was lustrous with increasing ray. Inexperience did not in this instance, as it often does, magnify the hero beyond his correct stature. With bitter pang did Scott see the prime glory pass to a subordinate. He had purposed this chief distinction for himself,—being wide-reaching and ambitious, a presidential aspirant for civic honors these many years, with a fair following. Indeed he had been

* 1 U. S. Grant's Memoirs, 139.

training for the next Whig candidacy before war was declared.* Conscious of these political hopes, which he had not cherished in secret, he was sensitive the more to every move of this hostile administration which tended to destroy them. Congress sanctioned the war; Taylor's small army at the Rio Grande was thought to be 1846. in peril; † and at this juncture it was that our May-June. commander-in-chief was led, naturally enough, to suppose that he would be sent to the front with re-enforcements of regulars and some twenty thousand of the new volunteers, and in the heart of Mexico conquer a peace. Such a responsibility Scott accepted gladly,—working at the war department more than eleven hours a day, and by candle-light, to organize and apportion our new forces, provide their transportation and supplies, and put them in proper motion from their respective points. He had intended leaving Washington about the last of May to take his magnificent tour of the Ohio and Mississippi; after assuring himself that all the arrangements over this vast circuit were complete, he intended proceeding to the Rio Grande, accompanied by troops and officers, and concentrating upon his person the gaze of the whole country. All this and more he saw in the night visions which could not come to pass. He soon heard that the President was besieged by Democratic congressmen who came to remonstrate against this programme,—alleging, by a divination of Scott's own hopes, that his success, which was certain should he be sent to Mexico, would prostrate their party in 1848, and perhaps forever. Scott found the wary President faltering in his first intention, and soon saw that artful intriguer in politics, the Secretary of War, laboring with the Senate military committee to amend a bill they were about to introduce so as to add new major-generals to the regular establishment. Scott instantly denounced the trick of raising others to his rank; and Marcy in

* "He is now in full chase of the presidency," wrote Seward in January, 1846. 1 Seward's Life, 771.

† See vol. iv. p. 527.

return tried to give him a lecture. Thoroughly irritated, the general-in-chief flung into the Secretary's teeth, the next day, an indiscreet letter, which, after some ridiculous mention of his having stepped out to take "a hasty plate of soup," referred significantly to the "fire upon the rear" which he had to endure from "persons in high places." Forty-eight hours later came dispatches from Taylor which announced his safety and removed the first pressure of common anxiety. Scott thereupon was notified that he would not be sent to Mexico. Taylor about the same time was officially informed that the President assigned him to the command at the front, and meant to continue him in it. Scott bore his vexation as calmly as he could, and pursued his onerous routine, after appealing in vain to the justice of the President. In September he renewed a standing request he had already filed, to take command at ^{September.} the front, but in a cold and polite note Secretary Marcy informed him that the President declined to supersede General Taylor in conducting the campaign. Scott consoled himself as he might in the thought that, at all events, Whig leadership in the field had impressed the country too powerfully for the administration party to supersede it.* Taylor ere this had been promoted, with public acclamation, to major-general, and his brilliant victories, achieved before the war was two months old, put him practically and permanently above all others on the army list, Scott alone excepted.

The vexed commander, in his September letter to the Secretary of War, had argued that the gallant Taylor both expected and desired him to take command in the field. And this a little earlier was true enough. Taylor's ambition did not easily kindle; starting with no political aspirations, all his thoughts and wishes were occupied in bringing this war to a speedy and honorable close. As a loyal officer, who respected his superior, he had not only wished but expected that Scott would be assigned to duty over him at the Rio Grande; he had resolved to take his

* See letters in 1 Coleman's Crittenden, 243-250; 8 H. H. Bancroft, 370, 371.

superior's orders and give him every support.* Taylor had little acquaintance with politicians,—little of polities at all except to apply honest common sense to political problems whenever they should arise; and, like any true officer of the army or navy, he aimed most of all to serve the flag and the inseparable Union with his whole soul, and if need be, lay down his life for his country. He was a Whig chiefly by his prepossessions, had long admired Clay and felt a repugnance to Jackson, and he cherished a preference almost bigoted for gilt buttons and army blue of home manufacture.† As a Southerner, Taylor had invested in slave property, owning a plantation near Bâton Rouge, Louisiana, whither he retreated when off duty to live the patriarchal life humanely,—unlike Scott in this respect, whose long headquarters at New York and the Capital identified him rather with freedom. The additional rank now conferred on him by the President and the compliments so abundantly poured out by Congress and various State legislatures could not but please Taylor greatly, as the tribute of American citizens to a fellow-citizen; and being assigned to so honorable and responsible a command at length, he did not feel himself at liberty to decline it. It was late in July when, to his surprise, he learned that Polk's administration had elected him ^{July.} to conduct the war against Mexico, with the brevet rank of major-general; and with this official information came a plan of the coming campaign and a statement of the number and description of the troops to be employed. But Taylor's supplies for the new troops did not correspond to the plan; nor had the first wagon or wheel-carriage additional to what he brought from Corpus Christi reached him when September was half expired. ^{July-Sept.}

* Taylor's letters in 1 Coleman's Crittenden, 255.

† By way of illustrating Taylor's character, Scott narrates that the former had indorsed a friend's note in the time of the Kentucky speculations, when the rage for paper-money presently brought bankruptcy and ruin. Taylor became liable; but refusing to take advantage of stop-laws or any other expedient of the demagogues, he insisted upon paying all he owed in specie coin of the United States. 2 Scott's Autobiography, 390.

It seems that as soon as he had found war with Mexico inevitable he had made requisition on the governors of Louisiana and Texas for some five thousand men, to be brought into service for as long a term as the laws would permit,—not, as he informed the War Department and Major-General Gaines, to aid in defending American soil, but so that he might carry the war into the enemy's country. Gaines, superior in rank, but superannuated in all else but ambition of command, managed chiefly to embarrass Taylor by his officious muster of troops never called for;* and after the War Department decided that even of such volunteers as were summoned properly none could be legally held beyond a three months' term, though called out for six months, Taylor could do little but discharge them and put the new twelve months' volunteers in their places as fast as they arrived. These new volunteers were landed, not where Taylor had hoped to concentrate them, but nearly three hundred miles from the enemy, with a wilderness intervening for nearly half the distance, and not the means brought with them of removing, by land or water, a barrel of pork or flour, besides being deficient in many other articles of comfort. With all these drawbacks, however, Taylor's disposition was to make the best of such resources as he had, and go through one campaign, at least, determined to carry out the wishes of the Executive and win an honorable peace. It was not his custom to complain; but to Crittenden who had boldly taken his part in the Senate he wrote of his misgivings in confidence. Not less than Scott, whose political foes had insinuated that he idled his time away from the post to which his country called him, and shunned the field of danger, did Taylor distrust the plausible friendship of this administration. Editorial remarks in the *Union*, the government newspaper, and speeches made in Congress by Sevier and other Democrats high in the cabinet confidence, when silence from the distant border followed the declaration of war and our little army was thought to be in peril, led Taylor

* See vol. IV. p. 541.

to the conviction that had he failed to extricate himself from his dangers the administration and its friends would have thrown on him at once the whole responsibility of precipitating the war. "These Democrats," wrote Taylor, in confidence, "stood ready and had made up their minds to have sworn on the Holy Bible, had the Executive required it, that I had received no order to take a position on the Rio Grande." *

The news from our southwestern frontier which provoked Polk's message and the act of Congress declaring war with Mexico,† showed Taylor and his army on the eastern bank of the Rio Grande, threatening Matamoras opposite, and occupying already the disputed soil between that river and the Nueces to the eastward, which Texas, under its American usurpers, had indeed voted into its independent jurisdiction, but which Mexico alone had peopled, claiming still and with at least the better reason, that this domain was part of its own republic still,—Texas, the revolting province, having been bounded while belonging to Mexico by the inner river, the Nueces.‡ As far back as May 28, 1845, was it, and before our present administration had been in authority three months, 1845. that Zachary Taylor was ordered by the Secretary of War to put his forces where they might act in defence of Texas. This was in pursuance of the immediate admission of the Texan Republic into the American Union. Nothing in this general's first position at Corpus Christi, on the genuine frontier of Mexico, indicated hostilities beyond protecting Texas as one of our confederacy. But Mexico's refusal to receive Slidell as a resident envoy (which she had never promised to do) was resented as an act leading necessarily to war. President Polk pledged himself to avenge it; "our cup of forbearance was exhausted." § With the general object of seizing whatever territory we wanted if Mexico would not stop to negotiate,

* Taylor to J. J. Crittenden, 1 Coleman's Crittenden, 251.

† Vol. iv. p. 527; Act May 13, 1846.

‡ Vol. iv. p. 526,

§ Ib. pp. 524-527; despatch of Jan. 28, 1846.

Secretary Marcy instructed Taylor to advance and occupy
1846 a position near the east bank of the Rio del Norte
Jan. 13. (or Grande) and opposite Matamoras. At the same time our naval squadron was re-enforced in the Gulf of Mexico; for by this time the failure of Slidell's mission seemed probable. Taylor's orders forbade him to contest the common navigation of the Rio Grande or to treat the Mexicans at once as enemies; but should Mexico assume that character by a declaration of war or by any open act of hostility he was not to confine himself to the defensive.* With a little corps of but thirty-five hundred men,—well drilled, however, as few armies have been, for efficient service,—Taylor broke camp in March at Corpus Christi,

March. in obedience of these orders, and advanced, as we have described,† into the heart of that now disputed country which none but Mexicans had hitherto possessed. Point Isabel, a rocky eminence at the seashore, he selected as his depot of supplies, and thither the greater part of his military stores were sent by water.

Taylor, as a soldier, knew of no duty but to obey orders. On March 19, when the Little Colorado was reached, Mexican cavalry warned him that the passage of that stream would be considered an act of invasion; but he crossed without hesitation, and on the 24th halted at a village near Point Isabel,—the inhabitants fleeing at his approach, after applying the torch to their dwellings. Arriving at length opposite Matamoras, Taylor opened a parley with the Mexican General Mejia across the river. The parley was fruitless except to confirm the protests which Mexican officers and deputations had already made so repeatedly, that Taylor's march to the Rio Grande was a wanton invasion of the soil of their republic and an act of war. Taylor next threw up his fortifications on the

* U. S. Docs. 29th Cong. Sess. 1; 8 H. H. Bancroft's Pacific States,
346; 73 Niles, 235-238.

† Vol. iv. p. 526.

left bank, in front of Matamoras, and pointed his cannon at the town, feeling that a conflict might be precipitated at any moment. Mejia on the other bank prepared for an assault; the fortifications of the town were strengthened, and to increase the military force already concentrated there, Paredes, now President of the Mexican Republic, despatched General Ampudia with troops enough to swell the defending force to about five thousand, and placed him in command. This last was a military error; Ampudia's reputation was bad at Matamoras; and to allay the discontent of the people Paredes next supplanted him by Arista, another general, leaving Ampudia still as second in command. This was another military error; its effect was to sow dissension between the Mexican chiefs, and make their army quite inferior in confidence and capacity to the American force, ably handled and admirably disciplined, of little more than half its size. Ampudia, arriving first at Matamoras and supposing himself in secure command, warned Taylor peremptorily that unless he broke up his camp in twenty-four hours and retired beyond the bank of the Nueces, Mexico would accept the challenged war. It was Arista, however, who reached Matamoras twelve days later with superior commission, and on the same day notified our American commander that he considered hostilities already begun and should prosecute them. Arista's plan was next to throw troops across the Rio Grande on the same day and force Taylor's troops to an engagement. While this plan was in awkward execution, a small party of American dragoons, sent under Captain Thornton to reconnoitre, fell into a Mexican ambuscade and were captured by a superior force after some fighting. This was the collision of arms, these were the circumstances of provocation, upon which President Polk based his impassioned message to Congress of the 11th of May, upon receipt of the news,—alleging with brazen effrontery that Mexico had passed our boundary, had invaded our territory, and had shed American blood upon American soil. And it was to meet this emergency, that our Congress at once responded with its auda-

April 12.

April 24.

cious declaration of war, as existing already "by the act of Mexico." *

That war had already begun, in the just estimation of the hostile commanders, is evident; but which of the two republics had provoked hostilities was quite another question. Captain Thornton's little skirmish, with its sanguinary results, was not magnified by Taylor too greatly; indeed he blamed Thornton for exposing his dragoons in too great contempt of the enemy, and had him court-martialled for disobedience of orders.† But blood, whether Mexican or American, was not to be held so precious after Arista's plain declaration. To a people long disused to war, the first few drops that are spilt in token of an issue are redder than the seas incarnadine after war has begun in earnest. Arista went on, and so did Taylor, in warlike preparation,—the one to regain the costly soil between the Rio Grande and the Nueces, the other to cross the river westward and strike into the very heart of Mexico. Taylor pursued instructions; he had no sanction of Congress to wait for. He anticipated Arista's design, which

May. was to throw troops above and below, and capture his base of supplies; and while fortifying his camp opposite Matamoras he found the communications already cut off. It was a dark hour for our army and its commander. Re-enforcements for the Mexican host were constantly arriving, while our troops were far from external aid. Arista's troops hovered in force upon our general's flank and rear. On the 1st of May, Taylor marched back to the relief of Point Isabel with his main body, leaving at the new fort he had built by the Rio Grande, now about finished, a small garrison under charge of Major Brown, whose orders were to defend this fort to the last, and if the enemy should surround it, to fire signal-guns at intervals which might be heard on the road. The

* See vol iv. pp. 526, 527. And see 73 Niles, 235-238; 8 H. H. Bancroft, 350-353.

† Taylor to Crittenden, 1 Coleman's Crittenden, 251. Thornton's party was 63 strong. One account says that 7 were killed; another that about 16 were killed and wounded.

Mexicans, as feared, took early advantage of Taylor's departure, and at daylight on Sunday morning, May 3d, opened their batteries upon the new fort. Their cannonade was returned, though with little effect on either side, until, on the 6th, Major Brown received a mortal wound from a falling shell, and the command devolved upon Captain Hawkins. On the 7th Arista summoned the garrison to surrender, and Hawkins called a council of war. But the unanimous voice followed Taylor's injunction : "Defend the fort to the death!" Arista resumed his cannonade ; but the boom of Taylor's guns in the distance soon gave our garrison confidence that they had decided right. For one week altogether did this intrepid band sustain the bombardment,—a week of fatigue and painful suspense, but of few serious casualties. In honor of the Major who breathed his last shortly before his general returned in triumph, the work was named Fort Brown.*

Taylor meantime had reached Point Isabel, with his main force on the 2d of May. He met no enemy during his march of some twenty-seven miles, and found all safe at this base upon his arrival. But signal guns broke the air from the distant fort, and on the 7th he started back to its relief, with ordnance supplies and provisions. His active force now numbered 2,300; for the raw recruits from home who had reached Point Isabel were fit only for garrison duty and left behind. Taylor's reverse march was not to be an easy one; for Arista, the Mexican commander, had now taken up a strong position on the road, at a place called Palo Alto, about nine miles from Matamoras, with united forces, variously stated from 4,000 to 6,000, and offered battle. An hour before noon on the 8th Taylor came in sight of the enemy drawn up in battle array, and stretching more than a mile across a level and grassy plain, which skirted the

* 8 H. H. Bancroft, 365, and authorities cited; Ripley, Kendall, etc. Besides Major Brown, one sergeant was killed, and ten (or as some state, thirteen) were wounded.

edge of a chaparral thicket, and was flanked by swampy pools. A squadron of Mexican cavalry supported the right; on the left stood Torrejon's command with a splendid corps of lancers; while along the rest of the line were infantry masses with an alternate battery. Taylor's troops were formed at once in attacking columns under protection of dragoons, and moved steadily forward to within cannon range, when one of the enemy's batteries opened. Our column being then deployed into line, while the infantry kept in the rear at supporting distance, Ringgold's artillery answered the Mexican battery with fearful effect. In a battle bravely fought Taylor maintained the prudent defensive, seeing how greatly he was outnumbered, and relied mainly upon his artillery. In short, Palo Alto, the first real engagement of the Mexican war, was purely a cannon fight, and a singular one,—in which the superiority of the American arm, as well as of American generalship, was quickly apparent. Posted simply to sustain their batteries, our infantry stood at a safe range and saw opposing artillery contest the field; while Arista, obtuse to the situation, and jealous, probably, of Ampudia's better advice, exposed his troops obstinately to the unequal fire, sacrificing them thereby about five to our one. Ringgold on our side was mortally wounded; but Duncan, posted with artillery at the other extreme, had managed his guns with equal skill and address, while two eighteen-pounders at the centre shook the field with a steady concussion. The wadding from Duncan's guns having set fire to the tall grass, thick smoke shut out the two armies from each other's sight for a space in the afternoon. The cessation of carnage thus caused was to the American advantage; for when Arista changed his front, Taylor moved to correspond; and soon the Mexican line grew restive and impatient under a cannonade more murderous and deadly than before. In vain did Ampudia urge his superior to order a charge with bayonets. Arista hesitated until it was too late for courage, and when the order was given the men advanced, dispirited and distrusting their commander, only to be rolled back in con-

fusion by the scouring fire of the Americans. Darkness shrouded the scene, and both armies encamped for the night, among their dead and dying companions.*

At sunrise of the following day, Arista began to retreat towards Matamoras, execrated by his troops already; but soon halting, he took up a new position at the Resaca de la Palma, resolved to try once more the ordeal of battle, should Taylor persist in advancing. At ^{May 9.} a council of war on the previous night Taylor, though unsupported by the prevalent opinion of his officers, had decided to renew the march at once, and issued orders accordingly. Packing his train on the field of Palo Alto, and sending back the wounded to Point Isabel, he started, after the noon-day meal, upon the route already taken by the Mexican army, now marked by ghastly heaps of their unburied dead, lying in spots which showed how bravely they had stood up to meet their useless slaughter of the day preceding. About four in the afternoon Arista's new position was reached, which, unlike that of the 8th, had been chosen for safe resistance, so that Mexican batteries might sweep the road without engaging in a general combat. Here, on a slight ravine intersecting the main road, the Mexican troops were already posted, defended in front by sections of artillery, and well secured in the rear against the possibility of being outflanked. Taylor perceived at once that the great struggle must be along the road where these batteries were placed, with a ditch and breast-work in front. Forming his troops as best he might, he forced the action at once,—the enemy pointing their cannon and raining on our ranks a shower of grape-shot. At every discharge of the Mexican artillery the road was swept, nor could our columns move forward in earnest without dislodging first the Mexicans from their strong

* Kendall; Ripley, *passim*; 8 H. H. Bancroft, 353-356. Bancroft's excellent narrative makes too important the reflection of one writer upon General Taylor for not ordering a charge upon the Mexicans late in the afternoon, so as to sweep the field. This is hypercriticism. The disparity of the two armies in numbers was sufficient reason for avoiding so terrible and needless a risk.

position and capturing their pieces. Lieutenant Ridgely, the successor of the gallant Ringgold, advanced his battery with this end in view, supported by infantry regiments which were deployed as skirmishers. It soon became a hand-to-hand struggle up the ravine and through the clumpy thickets, where man engaged with man, and the little groups of soldiery, while pointing their muskets promiscuously through the dense bushes, lost sight repeatedly of their officers. But in nerve, steadiness, and confidence, and in the skill, too, with which they were handled, the American troops for the second time showed a decided advantage. From the first moment of conflict our army pressed its advance at every point except along the road where a Mexican battery kept up its incessant play. "You must take that battery," said Taylor to Captain May, who led a squadron of dragoons. The officer wheeled upon his horse, and with his stern riders, whose steeds pattered their iron hoofs, was soon at the brass muzzles which had done such damage. One discharge from the battery tore through our squadron, striking men and horses to the ground by its concussion; but as the smoke uplifted, May's war-horse was seen leaping the ditch, breastwork and all, pressed closely by his remaining followers, whose plumes streamed wildly; down, down, did they ride the enemy's artillery-men, dispersing them with their sabres in wild disorder. The Mexican infantry now closed in to recover the pieces; but Taylor seized the golden moment to order a charge. With loud hurrah our 5th and 8th infantry pressed forward at a run along the road and over the breastwork just after May, with six of his dragoons, while grasping a Mexican general for their prisoner, had been driven back. That charge decided the battle of the Resaca de la Palma. The defeat of the Mexican forces became a rout, and the foe fled to the Rio Grande in panic and tumultuous flight, seeking a safe refuge within the walls of Matamoras. Pursued to the river's edge, a great number of them were drowned while attempting to swim across.

This second conflict had taken place at but some three

miles' distance from Fort Brown, whose besieged garrison might have been seen listening anxiously to the distant cannonading of the day before. Their hopes rose inexpressibly this afternoon when the boom of the guns reopened so much nearer their ramparts. At length when, nearly at sunset, they saw the Mexican cavalry plunging wildly over the plain, with the broken foot-soldiery behind them, running in disorder, they knew that their relief was accomplished. Wearied but triumphant, Taylor's troops returned into the fort whence they had marched a week before, and were embraced by their brave companions.*

The victory on the American side was complete. The Mexicans lost all their artillery, war material, and baggage, besides Arista's private papers. Against this defeated general, whose obstinacy and hesitation had cost the Mexican Republic its most precious opportunity, the people's outcry was unanimous; and his government, concealing its own indiscretion in keeping Ampudia under him, stripped Arista of his command and sent him to a court-martial. But humiliated though they had been by an enemy so greatly inferior in numbers to their own, the courage and pertinacity of the Mexican troops could not but compel the respect of their adversaries. With more training and under better leaders they might make stubborn foemen, and at least they fought with that best of omens, their country's cause. The death figures were less in our favor on the second day's fight than the first; yet the Mexican slaughter was by far the greater, and from one fifth to one third of Arista's whole army was lost in the two engagements.†

These military operations were not of immense magnitude, but their recital at home made a profound impression.

* H. H. Bancroft, 357-360; Narratives of Kendall and Ripley, *passim*.

† See figures and conflicting statements concerning them collated in 8 H. H. Bancroft, 360. The Mexican loss in killed, wounded, and missing is not easily computed. Taylor reported a total of forty-three killed and one hundred and twenty-five wounded in the two engagements,—the chief loss being at Resaca de la Palma.

The cloud of despondency was lifted, which had been gathering over our nation's capital ever since the hazardous step was taken of declaring open hostilities with Mexico; and our little army was seen, not shattered to pieces, but full of spirit, finely officered, and urging on its work under a capable leader, who had not dallied for distant orders to reach him. Our successes were indeed brilliant, and won in that first flush of responsible war when battle scenes are magnified in their image, and every great victory seems to the popular mind, unused to such experiences, the finishing stroke. Taylor concentrated the public gaze at once, and his fortunes rose rapidly. He was the hero of the new hour. Honors and quick promotion came from the administration,—spontaneously, all the more, since the conferring of them gave Scott an opportune slight. But detached from politics though he had hitherto been, this junior officer was for that very reason to prove a worse thorn in the President's flesh than the senior soldier who sought successorship by the sword. Popular gratitude works out in choosing the benefactor President of the United States, or at least in talking of doing so. Whigs at once began to talk of the new hero as an available candidate, and one of their wisest politicians sent him a private message by an army officer, advising him to keep his eye towards Mexico, and the Presidential question would take care of itself.* With no such exalted ideas yet germinating in his brain, Taylor had gone on despatching his work in the meantime, ignorant of what politicians were machinating at home. Ready

in about one more week to assume again the military offensive, and having his heavy mortars brought up from Point Isabel, and a fleet of small boats collected, he gave orders on May 17th for our troops to pass over to Matamoras. The mortified Arista, unable to arrange an armistice, abandoned the town with the remnant of his forces; and on the 18th Taylor and his American army bore the national colors across the Rio

* 1 Thurlow Weed's Life, c. 58.

Grande and occupied Matamoras without resistance. It was early in June that Arista received his orders of removal, while on the retreat; to General Mejia he resigned his fugitive command. Taylor, now indisputably in the enemy's country, deemed it best not to interfere with the municipal laws of Mexico; and Matamoras, as well as Camargo and the other small towns in this vicinity whose submission was tendered, bore few of those hardships which are incident to military occupation. All religious and civil rights of the inhabitants were respected, and whatever supplies our army received were punctiliously paid for.*

June.

Taylor's new station of exalted confidence, as we have seen from his private letters, was by no means enviable; he placed very little faith in President Polk; nor did promotion and the honor of being preferred to our general-in-chief to conduct the war in the heart of Mexico, blind him to the difficulties he must encounter. Embarrassed by the arrival of superfluous volunteers for brief terms of service, by his inadequate means of transportation, and by the conflicting letters, moreover, which reached him from Scott and Secretary Marcy, showing that plot and counter-plot were colliding at Washington under the glazed surface of military orders,† it is not strange if this honest hero felt his prospects of success somewhat marred under the new conditions imposed upon him. No wonder that he was reticent about giving advice. What do you think (asked the Secretary of War, in July, with caressing confidence) of making the main invasion from some point on the sea coast, such as Tampico or Vera Cruz? As though the method of striking at the City of Mexico were to depend upon his new favorite's opinion. Taylor thought an expedition from Tampico impracticable; and as to Vera Cruz he modestly expressed himself, aware that the means of deciding that question, like the irritating ambitions, were at Washington city.

* 8 H. H. Bancroft, 366, 367.

† *Supra*, p. 10.

That operations, however, from the northern frontier should not look to the Mexican capital, but simply to cutting off the northern provinces — this opinion he gave clearly ; and to Crittenden, the only statesman whom he trusted as his personal friend, his full views were stated clearly. Saltillo, by way of Camargo and Monterey, was a highly important point for gathering a large force to cripple communications of the enemy ; but beyond that point his present advance was not likely to be maintained. The line to the City of Mexico should be from Vera Cruz when the season permitted, and after this first march was accomplished.* There was no flaw in such a plan, except, perhaps, in assuming that with an administration which hugged the wind of polities, and chose its own political methods in secret,—liking him for a commander only because it liked Scott less,—he might hope for continuous countenance long enough to conduct the two invading expeditions in sequence in his own person. “On to the capital !” was the popular cry at home, senseless as in all such wars, but instinctive ; and the administration resolved, and resolved correctly, that for effective military invasion, the route which Cortes took was the true one.

The twelve months’ volunteers began gradually to arrive, and Taylor pushed his interior operations as rapidly as possible towards Monterey, in the Saltillo direction. Camargo, a town on the Rio Grande above Matamoras, was his chosen depot of supplies. But annoying delays occurred. Light-draught steamers, which were needful to convey the men, with their subsistence and military stores, up the shallow river, it took long to procure from New Orleans. Next, from Camargo to Monterey, the expedition involved much hazardous delay and embarrassment. Means were wanting to sustain, at that remote distance, so large an invading force ; provisions and forage became scarce, pack mules were collected but slowly from the surrounding country ; in short Taylor soon found

* Cf. 1 Coleman’s Crittenden, 254 ; 8 H. H. Bancroft, 374, 375 ; House Ex. Docs., 60, 30th Cong. 1st Sess.

himself in the midst of hostile inhabitants, submissive enough, but scantily supplied with the stores indispensable for our army, even at the high prices they demanded. Difficulties like these, besides that of the volunteers enlisted about long enough to arrive at the seat of war and return home again, taxed sorely our general's patience ; and the summer saw but little accomplished. General Worth, however, arrived at Camargo with his division on the 24th of July, and occupied it without resistance ; and Taylor following at the earliest possible moment, the town was made his headquarters on the 8th of August. The army here concentrated for a forward movement numbered about 6,600 in officers and men, — the three divisions being commanded by Generals Twiggs, Worth, and Butler. To the third division were assigned most of the volunteers selected to serve at the front, in brigades led by Hamer, Quitman, and Henderson, — six thousand, or twice as many more of them being left behind in camp and garrison.* For, hampered as he was in supplies and transportation, Taylor preferred his regular troops to the new-comers, and trusted, as he had always done, to compactness and good discipline rather than numbers.

Of regulars, therefore, who left Camargo for the interior of Mexico under the American colors, there were now considerably more than three thousand ; of volunteers, somewhat less. Taylor's march westward began September 5th. His advance consisted of Texan rangers and a squadron of dragoons, — the three divisions following at intervals of an hour. For battle order his first division occupied the right, his second the left, and the volunteer division was in the centre. Under this arrangement Ceralvo was reached on the 9th, Marin on the 15th. Between Marin and Monterey and about twenty-four miles from the latter town our army collected on the banks of the Rio San Juan : and on the 18th the critical movement commenced.†

* 8 H. H. Bancroft, 377 ; Mansfield, 57.

† 8 H. H. Bancroft, 377-382 ; Ex. Doc. 60, 30th Cong. 1st Sess.

It was found that Ampudia, favored by Arista's downfall, had been entrusted with the Mexican defences at Monterey. During the long and inevitable lapse of our offensive operations, the Mexicans had found a chance to recruit and reorganize upon their interior line. Arista's shattered army, under the provisional command of Mejia,

^{May-Sept.} had been transferred to Monterey, when that city was thought to be the objective point of Taylor's new expedition. But while thus occupied, the Mexican government rotated after its accustomed fashion; and Santa Anna, whose return from exile our administration had so despicably aided,* supplanted Paredes as President. He showed the true temper of his gratitude to his American benefactors by infusing new energy into Mexico's patriotic preparations for resistance, and offering to take the field in person. Popularity was the lever to his ambition, and he worked it. A new levy of thirty thousand men was ordered, with San Luis Potosi, the most considerable northern city, as the rendezvous for mustering them into service. Ampudia, summoned already to the Mexican capital to attend the investigation of Arista, so ingratiated himself into Santa Anna's favor as to receive the chief command of the army of the North. From San Luis Potosi he moved to Monterey a large re-enforcement by the end of August, and assumed the responsibility confided this time ungrudgingly. But Ampudia soon showed signs of weakness such as he had censured in Arista, and fared but little better in the confidence of his subordinates. Nevertheless, and in spite of military councils which wrangled and opposed his plans, he succeeded in making the works of Monterey very powerful before Taylor's approach. His force amounted, probably, to about ten thousand, of whom seven thousand were troops of the line.†

Monterey has a lovely situation in the green valley of the Sierra Madre, surrounded by mountain ridges. It

* Vol. iv. p. 536.

† 8 H. H. Bancroft, 377-382, and citations.

extends as a parallelogram, with the long ends resting nearly east and west by the bank of the river San Juan, which makes a bend near the easterly end of the town, so as to protect that flank while leaving the opposite one exposed. Directly north of Monterey and just upon the suburbs stood the citadel, which mounted about twelve guns of different calibre, and covered the different roads by which the city was approached. There were other forts near by, connected by a system of lunettes and barricades, which improved the advantage of high hills on both sides of the river. Taylor's army, approaching the citadel from the north, arrived in front of Monterey on the 19th of September, and pitched tents about two miles distant, in a beautiful grove, where fresh springs and heavy shade trees made a welcome camping-ground. After a careful reconnaissance, the General concluded that the weak point in the enemy's defences of the city was at the fortified hills on the west; he determined consequently to occupy the Saltillo road, so as to cut off all supplies from beyond the town. Worth, on the 20th, being detached for that purpose with his division and a body of Texans, was directed to make a wide circuit of the town and the citadel. Upon ascertaining that this detachment had reached the proper point, Taylor on the morning of the 21st advanced the 1st and 3d regiments of infantry, and a battalion of volunteers with Captain Bragg's field-battery, the whole under command of Garland, so as to make a diversion against the eastern end of the town. The assault of Monterey now began in earnest, and three days of hard fighting with many vicissitudes completed the task. Garland's attack on the first day was very near a failure, for Bragg's light guns could avail but little against the heavier ordnance opposed to them; and while rushing through the suburbs into the narrow streets of the town, the assailants were galled by the brisk fire which opened from fort and citadel, — from house-tops, too, and barricades, whence rattled volley after volley of musketry. Our officers dropped at their posts, companies were decimated, and all appeared in confusion.

Sept. 19, 20.

Sept. 21-23.

Taylor ordered General Butler, with the 3d, and part of the 4th infantry, and Quitman's brigade of Mississippi and Tennessee volunteers, to support Garland's wavering division; but the first day's effort to carry the town at the east proved a failure. Butler fell wounded; the Mexicans still held their strong fort erected in this quarter; and our only gain consisted in a lesser work on the suburbs which Captain Backus of the 1st infantry had enabled Quitman's brigade to capture by scaling with his sharp-shooters the top of a neighboring tannery, and from its commanding shelter picking off the Mexicans one by one in the garrison. Taylor's loss in killed and wounded was very great, and among his line officers several of the highest promise here lost their lives. But night brought cheering news from Worth: he now occupied fully the Saltillo road, had cut off the enemy's supplies and re-enforcements, and carried by storm, besides, one of the western heights of the town with trivial loss. The laurels of the next two days were won by that same brave officer in operations against the town and its outworks from the west side. He scaled difficult heights, stormed batteries, won fight after fight, and finally forced his way down into Monterey, driving the enemy and the Mexican batteries through the streets before him. On the 22d no active operations occurred on the eastern side of the town, though the citadel and the strong fort of the Mexicans kept up a desultory fire. By the 23d it was found that Ampudia, faint-hearted like his followers, had abandoned almost entirely his outer defences, and retired to an interior line at the public square. Worth, from the west on the same day, moved forward his two columns on the two principal streets which led to the plaza, as Taylor, with Quitman in the advance, and Twiggs in reserve, marched towards the same point, taking care on the way to seize the abandoned works. The junction and co-operation of our divided forces would have been formidable enough had the Mexicans resisted stubbornly, as their defensive means enabled them to do. Taylor held back for an opportunity to confer with Worth, of whose vigorous advance he was not yet

aware, and to plan a combined attack. But Worth's forces pressed forward from their western gateway, inspirited as the fugitive enemy became depressed, and advanced from street to street, and from house to house towards the plaza. Where streets were barricaded and defended they would work their way through gardens and the halls of houses. Arriving about dusk within proper range of the public square, Worth planted a mortar of artillery, whose hot shells dropped with great precision into the military crowd huddled there like flocks of sheep.

Darkness now curtained the scene and the next day's incidents averted an impending slaughter. Early in the morning of the 24th, Ampudia sent an officer to Taylor's headquarters with proposals to capitulate. A cessation of fire was agreed upon, but it took time to settle the terms of surrender. The Mexican general, whatever military faults might have been ascribed to him, showed laudable anxiety for the pride of his command when defeat was inevitable. The first proposals on each side having been rejected, Taylor consented that a joint commission of officers should confer together. But the officers chosen on the Mexican side partook of Ampudia's sensitive tenacity, who had declared with true Spanish vehemence that he would perish beneath the ruins of Monterey sooner than evacuate with his troops as paroled prisoners of war. The conference in consequence had nearly broken up disastrously, when, at the last moment, a settlement was accomplished. The Mexican troops were allowed to march out from Monterey with their small arms and accoutrements, one field-battery, and twenty-one rounds of ammunition; all other munitions of war and supplies were turned over to the American adversary; seven days were given to Ampudia to evacuate, and a mutual armistice of eight weeks was agreed upon. Thus did Monterey, with its citadel, pass into the invader's possession, with guns, munitions, and other valuable stores. Taylor's terms of capitulation were generous, and, as many distant critics complained, too generous; but his reasons were good for concluding them. The loss sus-

Sept. 24.

tained on our side was very heavy ; the enemy, with severer loss to be sure, had resisted with an endurance quite unexpected, which won the admiration of their immediate conquerors ; and considerations of humanity outweighed the doubtful advantage to be gained by the resumption of an assault, under such disparity of numbers and artillery resources. This armistice, moreover, paralyzed the enemy's operations at a time when, from want of adequate means, Taylor could not possibly have moved farther.*

The invasion of Mexico on this northerly line, which all the while had been, in a certain sense, experimental, could continue but little farther ; and Taylor by this time had fully determined that Saltillo should be his ultimate limit. Towards that point he recommenced his advance, as soon as occasion and the terms of the armistice would permit.† But now his own fickle favor with this administration was to suffer reverse. Possibly our President felt some misgiving about this old soldier's aptitude for those broader operations which required a vigorous prosecution ; possibly too, this commander's views concerning the best route for reaching the Mexican capital had not been announced with sufficient positiveness from

* See Ex. Doc. 60, 30th Congress, 1st sess. 355, 356, and other authorities cited in 8 H. H. Bancroft, 401. For full details of the siege of Monterey see Ripley, Mansfield, *passim*, and 8 H. H. Bancroft, c. 15. Over five hundred were killed and wounded on the American side.

† Mr. Bancroft's narrative of the Mexican War, which is interesting and exhaustive, making copious reference to all the earlier authorities, is not free from a disposition to disparage Taylor's military achievements, and Scott's besides, as though to adopt the tone of Secretary Marcy's official reports, which were written, we must remember, in self-defence. "With the fall of Monterey," observes this history, "the campaign on the Rio Grande may be considered as ended." 8 H. H. Bancroft, 399. There was no campaign on the Rio Grande, properly speaking, except so far as that river was kept protected as a channel of supplies for our operations in Mexico. Taylor's line of invasion made Saltillo, by way of Monterey, the constant objective point, thereby furthering some demonstration against the Mexican forces concentrated at San Luis Potosi. Buena Vista justified his invasion, and that battle in reality closed the present campaign.

his distant and disadvantageous point of observation ; but that jealousy of Taylor's rising glory tinged the secret deliberations at the White House, we have little question. On the 10th of October Taylor received despatches from the War Department showing that orders had been sent directly on the 22d of September to one of his subordinates, General Patterson, then at Camargo, to prepare for an expedition to Tampico, taking a strong detachment with him from Taylor's command. Distance and the pressure of time were the reasons given for this official detail, which did not mollify Taylor by asking his approval. Next, after receiving the despatches which announced the fall of Monterey, Secretary Marcy sent a response which showed that the President was displeased with the terms of surrender, and wished the armistice to cease at once. Taylor received this just as the armistice was about to expire. A third despatch directed the general not to advance towards San Luis Potosi, but to remain where he was and fortify Monterey ; at the same time suggesting that General Patterson with four thousand men should be detached for an expedition to Vera Cruz. Replying to this last on the 14th of November, Taylor soon after received a private letter from Scott, informing him that the latter had addressed the War Department on the subject of Vera Cruz, figuring ten thousand as the force required for that expedition and claiming the command for himself instead of Patterson. Scott in fact gained from the administration the reward of persistent efforts about the same time that Taylor read this letter ; his plans for reaching Mexico City were officially approved, and President Polk in person ordered him, with the blandest expressions of confidence, to repair at once to Mexico, take command of the forces there assembled and organize an expedition to operate on the Gulf coast.* Our General-in-chief exultingly prepared for his departure, and, at once leaving Washington for New

* These orders were about the 18th of November, and communicated through official channels on the 23d. 2 Scott's Memoirs, 397 ; 1 Coleman's Crittenden, 271.

York, he wrote a second private letter to Taylor on the 24th, apprising him that he was on his way, not to supersede (as he explained it), but to take from him the greater part of his command, leaving him to act on the defensive until Congress could meet and raise another army. Taylor,

^{December.} when he received this last unwelcome missive, was again on the march, intent upon occupying Saltillo, and apprehensive of an attack from the main Mexican army, which was collected at San Luis Potosi and commanded by Santa Anna in person. No official

^{Dec. 24.} announcement of this change of plans had reached him, no intimation from any source, except Scott's letter, whose tone was too complacent to break the news gently. Taylor's mortification was extreme. It needed more tact than Scott's pen could command to dispel from our blunt hero's mind the idea that his superior had

^{1847.} played double with him. And when, being at ^{Jan. 14.} Victoria, Taylor received the news, three weeks later, that Scott, in clear disregard of a message the former had sent to appoint there an interview, reached Camargo

^{Jan. 3.} on the 30th of December, and then proceeded by virtue of his superior rank, and without a consultation at all, to order General Butler, who was stationed there, to put in instant movement nine thousand of the choicest troops of this Rio Grande army, besides two batteries of artillery, on his own exaggerated count of the remnant that would be left, Taylor was deeply indignant and reproached his chief bitterly.* Scott, it seems, had

* See 8 H. H. Bancroft, 413, 414; 1 Coleman's Crittenden, 272. Scott, in his Memoirs (not written, one must observe, until many years later) tries to purge himself of fault for not meeting Taylor, as he claims to have intended doing, for the purpose of harmonizing their operations. He assigns various excuses not altogether tenable. 2 Scott's Memoirs, 402. It should be remarked that so long as Taylor lived, no explanation satisfactory to him on this point was ever made. Our impression is that Scott, being now quite elated by his new orders, preferred bringing Taylor to himself, rather than going forward a little farther to encounter him upon his own chosen ground, and that he was very glad, moreover, to find an excuse for dispensing with a mission which must have been very delicate and irritating.

sent to his distinguished subordinate, not an expression of his disappointment at missing that proposed interview (which in his inner heart he must have felt quite disposed to escape), but copies of the orders he had issued to Butler; and one of these copies which fell unfortunately into the hands of Santa Anna, made the Mexican chief aware, not only of our new designs against Vera Cruz, but of the great reduction it would involve besides in Taylor's army.

This preference of Scott by our government for the new route of operations in Mexico was neither unwise nor unnatural; for, after all, the quarrel was a trivial one which had caused his seniority to be hitherto set aside in favor of Taylor. But the choice was made with very little courtesy towards the general already commanding in the field, who had fully justified all the confidence reposed in him by the President and his countrymen. Taylor complained, and with just reason, that neither Scott nor the administration had come out in an open and manly way to announce the change on grounds of military precedence, nor advised him at once of the new necessities, instead of drawing essential troops from his command without the production of orders of any description from the Secretary of War. The war department, he felt, had withdrawn its confidence from him, and he suspected that he was to be sacrificed. But whether sacrificed or not in the effort, as he now wrote, he was resolved to carry out the purposes of the government which had brought him thither, at the same time opposing no obstacle to Scott's complete success in his new expedition.*

A soldier of rectitude, devoted to his country, does often his best work under the stinging sense that the government he serves has dishonored him. Warriors without principle have under like circumstances yielded to the temptation to turn traitor to their cause. President Polk, if induced to believe that Taylor was a slow and vacillating soldier, without fertility of resources, was soon undeceived; and those who had hoped to quench his brightness

* 8 H. H. Bancroft, 411, and citations; 1 Coleman's Crittenden.
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were to be discomfited. Great Santa Anna, with a well-trained body 20,000 strong, full of hope and enthusiasm to be under him, was not slow to follow up the advantage he perceived in the sudden depletion of Taylor's invading

army. He began a march accordingly, on the 28th ^{January.}

of January, from San Luis Potosi towards Saltillo. Taylor, with his whole command now reduced to about 7,500 men of all arms, whose long line stretched from Saltillo to the Rio Grande, and down the Rio Grande to its mouth at Matamoras, awaited the encounter which he had

long expected before his army was reduced to a ^{Feb. 14-22.} skeleton. His camp had been pitched eighteen miles in advance of Saltillo; but on learning of the enemy's approach, he fell back to the hacienda of Buena Vista, whose situation favored better the operations of an inferior force.

Santa Anna had hoped to surprise him at the advanced camp, but disappointed in this he pushed forward his troops, without giving them proper rest, believing too credulously that the Americans had fled. The site of Buena Vista was a narrow mountain pass near the valley of Saltillo, where an elevated plateau extended in front of a mountain, protected in the front and rear by formidable ravines, and having a connecting ridge from which the road might be swept in each direction. This plateau Taylor chose as his battle-ground; and here Santa Anna found the foe already drawn up expectant in its strong position when he arrived with his army all breathless and weary. Nothing daunted, the Mexican commander produced a flag of truce, and sent under it a peremptory summons to surrender,

^{Feb. 22.} warning Taylor in boastful words, such as heroes

of the epic poem were wont to utter, that he was now surrounded by 20,000 men, and could not in any human probability avoid being routed and cut to pieces. To this pompous demand, which permitted an hour's reflection, Taylor replied, in a laconic message, that he declined the invitation. The Mexican messenger returned, and Santa Anna, wisely enough, showed little disposition to open the battle that day. Occasionally a shell was thrown into our lines ineffectively; and small skirmishes

occurred in the mountains while daylight lasted. Taylor, with a small force, now went back to Saltillo to arrange for its safety, and through the bitter cold night, exposed to beating rains, the two armies bivouacked with relative positions unchanged.* Thus passed one of our national holidays, — the anniversary of Washington's birth.

On the morning of the 23d, Taylor, having Feb. 23. carefully guarded his rear against surprise, returned to Buena Vista with all the available force he could muster. The action by this time was already warm; for at 8 o'clock the Mexicans advanced in solid columns to attack our left and centre, a body of light troops having been advanced along the mountain side about daybreak. Ampudia commanded on the extreme left, with the divisions of Pacheco and other Mexican generals in a supporting position. Taylor reached the field at a critical moment, when our left flank was vigorously assailed, and a volunteer body, exposed where the enemy's fire was hottest, wavered and broke, — one Indiana regiment fleeing the field in a panic and great disorder. Without hesitation, Taylor brought his Mississippi regiment into action, with the 2d Kentuckian and Bragg's artillery. These, with the 2d Illinois and some fragmentary corps, drove back the Mexican force so superior in numbers, blocked their chase of the fugitives, and by a brilliant charge recovered much of the ground that had just been lost. At this point the battle now raged long and desperately, shock after shock of the splendid Mexican cavalry being repulsed, and the well-directed fire of our artillery decimating the ranks of those who so lately were on the verge of victory. The same gallantry was perceptible on the Mexican side which Taylor had perceived in his former engagements; yet as against the firmness and effect of our disciplined soldiery, a gallantry which sank quickly into despondency after the failure of the first onset. Reserved strength or endurance was their deficiency; they dreaded

* 8 H. H. Bancroft, 423, and authorities cited; Ex. Doc., 30th Congress, 1st Sess.

us deep in their hearts. Our forces lost heavily, but their loss was appalling; and Santa Anna missed his opportunity, as inferior Mexican generals had missed theirs, by neglecting to re-enforce or relieve at the right moment when troops in position got nervous and unstrung. Taylor's quick eye, on the contrary, swept the lines in an instant, and where the fight grew dangerous he brought up fresh reserves to impart fresh spirit. The Mexican cavalry, after skirting the base of the mountains, bore down upon the hacienda of Buena Vista and our baggage stores. Colonel May, sent promptly with artillery, rescued our baggage guard in time from the superior flood of numbers; and in fact before his cavalry arrived there, a brave stand had been made by the mounted volunteers of Arkansas and Kentucky, under Colonels Marshall and Yell. In a charge which put the enemy to flight, Yell was killed at the head of his column. By their effort thus to outflank us the Mexicans had attained a perilous position, the large force which had pressed round our rear being cut off from the main body. Santa Anna, by sending a meaningless message to General Taylor, probably as a ruse on his part, gained time to enable this detachment to rejoin the main body, and the movements along the Mexican line gradually ceased. In one last conflict near our right, the Americans lost their heaviest; here Colonels Hardin, McKee, and Clay, of the volunteers, fell while at the head of their regiments. Afternoon lengthened into night; silence succeeded the tumultuous roar of death, whose hideous echoes had reverberated all day among these picturesque hills. Once more did Taylor's army bivouac under the cold sky, expecting a conflict

with the morning's sun. But when morning red-
Feb. 24. dened the horizon, it was found that Santa Anna had fallen back to the point at which he meditated a surprise two days before. An exchange of prisoners was soon effected, and Santa Anna's great Mexican army of 20,000, now humiliated in battle by less than a quarter part of their own numbers, retreated in deplorable flight to San Luis Potosi, whither Taylor with his present in-

adequate force could not possibly pursue. The ghastly arithmetic cast up our loss in killed, wounded, and missing, as less, and by some accounts, considerably less than 750. But when Santa Anna reached the strong city from which he had advanced so buoyantly, more than one half of his fine army had melted away.*

No better token can be given of consummate generalship than that victory is wrested, not only against great odds, but in confutation, besides, of the theorists who are prepared to demonstrate that there should have been no victory at all. It was the admirable skill and intrepidity with which our cause was conducted, against terrible odds, that not only saved the day for the Americans but wrested a victory. Buena Vista shines out as unquestionably the most brilliant engagement of the present war, and in American memory the most popular. One incident related of it affected powerfully the imagination: Mexican Sisters of Mercy were seen hovering near the field of death and ministering to the dead and dying of both armies; and upon this theme was written a poem long familiar, — "The Angels of Buena Vista." Taylor himself never showed more nerve; but when everything seemed to falter, he was seen riding upon the plateau amid the thickest of the fight, and calmly surveying the scene. The news of his brilliant success reached our Atlantic coast after a long lull, and while the public mind was in anxious suspense; for Taylor's dangerous situation was well-understood at home, and the swift bulletin from the far-off field followed painful rumors that in a bloody fight his army had been surrounded and cut to pieces. What exultation swept away that dark anxiety when the despatches were published which told the tale so modestly, none but a contemporary of those times could feel. Dissembling as to their enmity, if they had any, Polk's cabinet swelled the torrent of acclamation so irresistible, for their own relief was great. Most fortunate was this fight for the prestige of the

* See 8 H. H. Bancroft, c. 16; Carleton's Buena Vista; Kendall, Ripley, Jay, etc., *passim*.

American arms, and for the chief personage who figured in it. Scott's splendid operations in his new expedition had not yet been heard from; and it was high time for political parties to search out their candidates. Our present hero was aided, too, by a public sense that he had been unfairly dealt with. In fine, Buena Vista made Zachary Taylor the next president, placed all rivals and personal enemies below him, and installed him as the most popular of American citizens for the rest of his life.

General Wool, an able officer of the regular service, joined Taylor in time for this hard-fought fight, with a force of some twenty-five hundred volunteers, who had been seasoned in camp life by a toilsome march through Chihuahua, an isolated province of Mexico to the northward, which, though easily occupied, was too barren and

remote to affect the issue of this war. Upon
 1846 Sept.- Taylor's advice, that separate department had
 1847. been broken up, and Wool was sent to reinforce
 Feb. the army of invasion; which orders Wool
 obeyed with alacrity, and in the field of Buena Vista did
 conspicuous service.* Of our temporary occupation of
 Chihuahua, Colonel Doniphan's expedition formed the
 picturesque feature,† chiefly on account of his romantic
 feat in accomplishing a difficult march, of over three thou-
 sand miles, through a hostile and unexplored country,
 finally reaching New Orleans, where his troops were dis-
 charged.‡ General Patterson's detail from Taylor's com-
 mand for the Tampico invasion, on Secretary Marcy's

1846. independent order,§ in the fall of 1846, involved
 Oct.-Nov. still another military movement of little practical
 consequence; for Tampico was evacuated under Santa
 Anna's order before it could be attacked at all. Commo-
 dore Perry occupied the unresisting fort with his fleet

* See Ex. Doc. 60, 30th Cong. 1st Sess.; 8 H. H. Bancroft, c. 16.

† *Supra*, vol. iv. p. 525.

‡ 8 H. H. Bancroft, 406.

§ *Supra*, p. 31.

about the middle of November, and Patterson's whole exploit was to supply a garrison.*

Our military narrative turns now to the new expedition into the heart of Mexico by way of Vera Cruz, which was the last and decisive one, and to Winfield Scott, the commander of our army, who for the remainder of this war monopolized the chief glory. Upon the earlier and more northern route of invasion active operations ceased with the battle of Buena Vista; Taylor's veteran army, or such of it as remained after so large and valuable a part had been withdrawn for the exigencies of the new campaign, and after the discharge, too, of volunteer regiments whose year of service had expired, kept henceforth to the strictly defensive occupation of the Rio Grande and its present base. The line of invasion which our government had finally chosen, upon Scott's written memorial to the Secretary of War was, in fact, the only practicable one for wringing written terms of peace out of a people so wilfully patriotic as the Mexicans. They had imbibed from our earlier example the passion, if not the capacity, for maintaining self-government, under a plan of solid federation. Scott's military plans were approved by our government, with the fundamental idea upon which he had based them. This fundamental idea was that our only hope of conquering a peace, and of gaining from Mexico a formal cession of the territory we had occupied without her consent, lay in capturing her historical capital and humbling her pride to the dust. To organize this crowning expedition, 1846. whose entrance into the enemy's country was November. to be forced at Vera Cruz, called forth Scott's zeal; and, as already related, his orders were to proceed to the field in person and take command of the forces there assembled.†

Delighted though he was with his call to active duty, Scott engaged in his new task with no genuine confidence,

* 8 H. H. Bancroft, 411.

† *Supra*, p. 31; Ex. Doc. House, 30th Cong. 1st Sess.

in the good intentions of his government, which he had so long besieged in vain ; but he relied upon his own capacity to win, with fitting opportunity, a reputation which the gratitude of his fellow-countrymen would shield from detraction. He appreciated the wish of the administration and its friends to make this war a nursery of Democratic generals, and felt that events alone had compelled it to choose between two Whigs for chief command in the field ; he knew, too, that the prime political need of bringing this war, so rashly undertaken, to a successful close at the speediest moment, and a deference, moreover, to public opinion, were the prime elements, if not the only ones, which maintained himself and Taylor, or either of them, in favor. This aspect of the President's military selections, indeed, preyed somewhat on his jealous mind, and so constantly that, with perhaps too keen a suspicion of the influences which played about the inner circles of the administration, and too much political aspiration for himself, he saw in every move a secret desire to degrade the generals of one school of politics and to promote those of the other. In the rebuke of Taylor's armistice at Monterey he discerned an official wish to put Patterson or Butler in command,— the generals whose detail in turn presently from his rear gave Taylor such bitter offence.* In his own retarded turn of good luck he expected new proofs of the administration's duplicity ; nor, with the vigilance of personal friends to aid him, was he long in finding them. For a week prior to his orders (so Scott tells his story), the President sent for him daily, lavished upon him every expression of kindness and confidence, assured him again and again that the war must be made to march toward a successful conclusion, and that he was the only general who could give to it the necessary impetus and direction ; and, in short, so entirely won was Scott's heart that his correspondence with his own party claquers brimmed over with acknowledgment of the handsome treatment the administration was according him.†

* 1 Coleman's Crittenden, 260.

† 2 Scott's Memoirs, 399, 400.

All this, to be sure, differed far from the tone of his earlier private comments, and one may well infer, besides, that those Presidential interviews bore in disparagement of Taylor. Such sudden harmony had not in it the stuff of endurance. While in the very act of embarking at New Orleans for the seat of war, Scott received a confidential letter through a stranger's hand, stating that the President had asked Congress to create the grade of lieutenant-general, so as to send out Senator Benton as his outranking officer. Scott could not believe this piece of news, but it gave him an uneasy foreboding, and by the time he was fairly on land again, he received confirmation enough to make him curse that clumsy treachery and its authors for the rest of his life.* That intrigue failed, as our reader has seen,† and in fact every effort to conduct the Mexican war under generals of Polk's own politics. And it is much to Scott's renown that his splendid progress to the Mexican capital in pursuance of the orders which sent him thither—a progress untarnished by a single military failure—saved him from supersedure; for in all his later correspondence with the War Department, not strictly official, he showed himself more captious and disrespectful than he had ever been.

This general claims credit for the plan of the Vera Cruz route as his own cherished and original one; and it is certain, that before its final adoption, while both Taylor and the Secretary of War had glanced at it favorably, each had vacillated about taking it, or at least about taking it at so early a date. Taylor himself, in his first moment of mortified grief, would sooner have concentrated our whole American force at Saltillo, marched into the heart of the country, where ample supplies of provisions and forage were obtainable, and throwing an army of twenty thousand against Santa Anna, or between him and the capital, crushed the foe where it had already collected, and from San Luis Potosi dictated a peace.‡ Taylor's plan, if

* 2 Scott's Memoirs, 399, 400.

† See vol. iv p. 542.

‡ Taylor to Crittenden, January 26, 1847; 2 Coleman's Crittenden, 276; cf. 2 Scott's Memoirs, 404.

he meant it as a deliberate one (for he only put forth this idea casually to a confidential friend), was never tested; but what he presently did at Buena Vista, crippled as the government had left him, shows that in a more equal fight he might have cut the whole Mexican army to pieces, and taken Santa Anna prisoner. But whether this would have ended the Mexican war, by dispensing with the Vera Cruz expedition, is by no means certain.

What actually transpired, and not what might have been, concerns this narrative. To borrow Scott's later comment, the Mexicans, who had never apprehended an effective invasion from the quarter where he struck, might have said, as did the Russians when Napoleon marched upon Moscow: "Come unto us with few and we will overwhelm you; come unto us with many, and you shall overwhelm yourselves."* None the less, however, did Scott enter upon his perilous campaign with coolness and perfect confidence in the results. Experience had shown the army of the Rio Grande that we could safely count upon inferior skill in the handling of our opponents. About February 15th began the American embarkation, and on the Lobos islands, a group about a third of the distance from Tampico towards Vera Cruz, appointed as a rendezvous, Scott's new army of invasion was organized, now numbering over twelve thousand men. The two brigades of regulars were commanded respectively by Worth and Twiggs; Patterson led the division of volunteers, with Pillow, Quitman, and Shields for brigadier-generals; in short, with those who now arrived and those who joined the expedition afterwards, all the high military aspirants who were in political sympathy with the administration, and thirsted for political fame, became combined in Scott's command and served under his orders;† a situation which provoked some bitter quarrels as time went on.

* 2 Scott's Memoirs, 404.

† 2 Scott, 413; 8 H. H. Bancroft, 439, 2 Ripley, 17.

At Anton Lizardo the fleet of transports, which numbered about eighty vessels, anchored on the 7th of March ; and Scott, after due examination, chose a beach about three miles south of Vera Cruz as the place for best effecting a landing. It was needful to launch the boats and then take advantage of the first favorable state of the surf for debarkation. Ignorant of President Santa Anna's advance in force from San Luis Potosi upon Taylor's army, and of the disastrous battle already fought, Scott made preparations before landing for the most formidable struggle of the war. His minute precautions proved needless. The 9th of March dawned propitiously ; the sun was bright and the sea smooth as glass ; and in sight of his own imposing fleet, flanked by two naval steamers and five gunboats under Commodore Conner, while several foreign ships of war hovered about as spectators, fifty-five hundred American troops were put into surf-boats and pulled ashore late in the afternoon. During the night the remaining forces were debarked without the least injury or loss of life,— a few whizzing shells from the guns of the distant castle being the only Mexican opposition to his landing.*

Vera Cruz, well styled the gateway to the heart of Mexico,† is the port at which the chief proportion of all foreign imports into Mexico is entered. The railroad from Vera Cruz to the capital, already projected, was not completed until this unhappy people had undergone a still later invasion and a European one ; and at the present time the merchandise of that port was carried on mules to the City of Mexico, thence to be distributed all over the republic. An elevation of over eight thousand feet had to be overcome between seacoast and the interior ; and as this whole region was almost destitute of navigable streams, no such moving thing, probably, as a steamboat which plied a single mile could be found, when Polk declared war, in that whole unenterprising republic.‡

* See 2 Scott's Memoirs, 413-421 ; 8 H. H. Bancroft, 439.

† 8 H. H. Bancroft, 440.

‡ Waddy Thompson's Recollections, 205.

For the conveyance of passengers over the route between Vera Cruz and Mexico City, American and distant capital had supplied a line of stages.* Vera Cruz itself, that safe old port of commerce, with Orizaba's lofty peak towering behind it, snow-crowned and visible for more than fifty leagues at sea, bore an impressive but quiet aspect, safe, as it fancied itself, under the walls of the famous old castle of San Juan de Ulloa, whose island was at the entrance to the harbor, and sheltered in the background by a line of fortifications which encircled the town behind.† A defence more formidable to hostile armies than walls or antique guns was the vomito or yellow fever,—some large swamps in the rear of Vera Cruz breeding a deadly miasma in the summer months. But the season of Scott's descent upon this coast was not a sickly one, and other unexpected advantages were found in favor of our easy occupation. The citizens of Vera Cruz, it appears, were divided among themselves by the bitter national dissensions which had broken out in the capital; troops destined for their aid had been kept back; their forts were out of repair. Provisions, moreover, both in the town and the fortress were scarce; and had it not been for a French vessel which ran the blockade of the American fleet successfully, even the gunpowder supply in this port would have been quickly exhausted.‡ With artillery-guns of varying calibre, only part of which were mounted, in the town and castle, and with the whole garrison force numbering less than forty-five hundred, of whom about one fourth guarded the castle, it need not surprise us that Scott's landing was effected with such feeble resistance.§ Indeed during the entire space of its siege and bombardment which followed, Vera Cruz, in spite of repeated

* Waddy Thompson's Recollections, 10.

† Ib. c. I. The Vera Cruz of the present invasion was not the same town of the holy cross which Cortes founded in 1519; the latter and original settlement having been about six miles distant.

‡ 8 H. H. Bancroft, 440. In 2 Scott's Memoirs, 422, a view more favorable to the defenders is presented.

§ Ib. These ~~are~~ figures from the official returns of Mexico.

appeals to the central government, gained no further aid from without save such as guerilla bands and a few troops of cavalry might render.

Despondent though his cause, the commandant at the castle, Juan Morales, made the most of the feeble resources at his hand for defending the beleaguered city, hoping that by holding out until the return of yellow fever, he might enlist disease for an ally and compel the siege to be raised. Scott, with the same contingency in view to be avoided, resolved to take the city and the castle as quickly as possible, and then push forward his conquest into the healthy interior. With the concurrence of his staff he chose a gradual and scientific investment in preference to capture by storm, — his main purpose being to take the castle under the shelter of Vera Cruz itself. Already convinced of the President's duplicity, and feeling, as he figuratively expressed it, Polk's halter around his neck, Scott touched Mexican soil warily, disposed to save the slaughter of his men for the glorification of ambitious subordinates. He had been prompt, however, to invest Vera Cruz closely, so as to cut off its garrison from communication with the interior. And, long before this, the blockade of the port and its neighborhood under Commodore Conner had been completed. Proceeding, then, by siege, under the operations of Colonel Totten, a skilful engineer, Scott opened trenches, and established batteries, after driving in the posts and sentries of the enemy, and then made his approaches after the usual methods of war, taking care to use the town as a shield of defence between his own troops and the castle. Ground was broken on the 18th, and by the 22d, Morales refusing to surrender, cannonade from Scott's heavy ordnance, now in position, opened on the walls and forts. Commodore Perry's blockading squadron also approached within range and took part in the bombardment. For two days mortars belched forth, and the cannonade on both sides was terrific. The Mexicans worked their guns with great precision, but without corresponding effect, owing to the ample shelter of Scott's trenches, while his fire in return, more accurate

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still, did visible damage to the town,—houses being set on fire by the bursting shots and shells which crushed through the roofs. On the 23d more mortars were placed by Scott in position, and on the 24th a naval battery of thirty-two pounders and Paixhans guns increased the deadly activity. On this latter day, when the iron storm pelted most furiously, there came to our commander a memorial from the foreign consuls resident in Vera Cruz, asking for a truce in order that neutrals and the women and children might withdraw. Scott, having given an earlier permission to that effect which they had sullenly neglected, declined to comply, unless Morales himself asked the truce with a view to surrender. Next day a further battery was added by the assailants and the inhabitants of the town could bear the strain no longer. From city and castle our fire had been briskly returned, but the foreign inhabitants and non-combatants, convinced that further resistance was useless, now brought a pressure to bear for humanity's sake in the direction which Scott's message had intended. The ammunition, too, of the defenders was by this time nearly exhausted. On the 26th negotiations for a surrender were opened, Morales in dogged grief turning over the chief command to an officer disposed to submit, and the firing ceased. Articles the next day were signed and exchanged,

^{March 29.} agreeably to which on the morning of March 29th, General Worth took possession and command of the city and castle,—the Mexican garrison marching out, as they were permitted to do, with the honors of war, and the inhabitants receiving every assurance of protection in person and property, with freedom of religious worship. Thus fell Vera Cruz, with a loss on our side but a slight fraction of that sustained by the enemy,—not perhaps one twentieth part.*

The bombardment of Vera Cruz with its highly lurid effects did good service for many years in our cities as a subject for panorama and pyrotechnical display. Yet it

* 8 H. H. Bancroft, 447. See *ibid.* as to the conflicting estimates of loss on both sides.

gained Scott but scant popular renown, less, by far, than the skill and promptitude of his extensive arrangements should have achieved for him. By this time, at home, the opinion was spreading that the Mexican war, with its painful repetitions of resistance not less futile than stubborn, and its butcher lists, so disproportionate in the totals of the two sides, was by no means creditable to us. Buena Vista at length was proof indisputable that this sister republic was overmatched; that, to borrow the oft-quoted phrase of Corwin's eloquent and denunciatory speech in the Senate, the armed men of Mexico quailed before us; hence after Taylor's escape from peril, the contest flagged in interest, and, if the truth were told, many of our statesmen who had espoused this war with ardor, unaware of the scope of conquest intended by it, had come by this time to detest it. A few slaveholders, among whom was Ex-President Tyler, expressed the heartless wish to see the Mexicans whipped until they sued for mercy;* but the great humane majority of our people were touched with compassion for their enemies, and blushed with shame at the thought that we were robbing them of their territories. Scott in the present exploit was blamed by Mexico and foreign powers for refusing the petition of the non-combatants; but he justified his course by the rules of war.†

The base most favorable for invasion being now obtained, Scott next hastened his main columns towards the interior, detailing a subordinate to govern the captured city, and ordering the port thrown open to the trade of all nations, upon a fixed tariff of duties to be collected under his military direction. The scarcity of horses and mules detained our main body at Vera Cruz until nearly the middle of April. Perry's fleet in the mean time made a new sweep upon the small towns along the Gulf, capturing them in rapid succession, with little or no resistance. For the remnant of the war Mexico's whole

April-June.

* 2 Tyler's Life, 479.

† See Jay's Mexican War, 202; 2 Scott, 428.

eastern coast was controlled by our naval squadron, and Scott's operations on land were fully covered.*

Leaving Vera Cruz on the 12th of April with a small escort of cavalry, Scott hastened to the front, where, some April. fifty miles inland, the advance column, under

Twiggs and Patterson, had found a Mexican army drawn up to oppose their passage. By this time Santa Anna, fertile in resources and still sanguine, had recovered from the shock of his disastrous encounter with Taylor sufficiently to take the field once more in person against Taylor's superior officer. Bringing what was left of his former army from San Luis Potosi to the Mexican capital at the crisis of affairs, he had put down a March, Apr. civil revolution, assumed full authority, and prepared, though quite too late, to raise the siege of Vera Cruz, supposing it would have lasted much longer. Undismayed by the news of its surrender, he next rallied all the men

April. and means his anxious republic could muster for a last and spirited resistance, and took command of the forces in person, providing under a decree for the appointment of a substitute president to rule over civil affairs in his stead. In a stirring proclamation to the Mexican people he announced himself determined to die in their cause or else triumph. With an army of nine thousand to ten thousand men, raw and undisciplined, but patriotic at heart,—an army collected without money, and ill fed and clothed,—this indefatigable hero marched forward to intercept the invaders, and within twelve days from leaving the city of Mexico had drawn up his forces at the pass of Cerro Gordo, near the village of Plan del Rio, with forty or more pieces of artillery to protect their position; he had cut, moreover, a ditch three leagues in length after his arrival, throwing up intrenchments and placing half a dozen batteries in position. Remarkable as were these preparations, for so short a space of time, this vigorous commander, who personified for the moment all that was hopeful and noble in the Mexican cause, failed a

* 8 H. H. Bancroft, 448.

second time to measure himself prudently against the American invader. His works were inadequate against a commander so eminently accomplished as ours in the art of war.

Scott reached Plan del Rio on the 14th and was joined two days after by Worth and his command. Two days were spent in reconnoitring, and on the 17th our attack was begun. Cerro Gordo, a high hill which gave the name to this battle, rises from the bank of the river, whose course through a mountainous ravine, divides the high road from Vera Cruz. It is in this vicinity that the plain terminates, and the highway to Jalapa ascends abruptly, winding its long circuit among lofty hills. Of these hills the commanding points had all been fortified and garrisoned by the enemy, whose right was intrenched and resting on a safe precipice overhanging the stream, while on the left Cerro Gordo's lofty height commanded the approaches in all directions. In the rear toward Jalapa the main Mexican army was encamped on level ground. Santa Anna's position was strong and well chosen; but he had neglected to fortify his extreme left, not believing (so he afterward said) that even a goat could have approached him in that direction. Scott's practised eye detected the omission; and the plan he formed was, while menacing and engaging the enemy's front, to send a strong detachment to the rear, carry the height of Cerro Gordo, and then by gaining the Jalapa road at the foot, cut off a retreat in every direction, and command the field. This plan was executed with great spirit and energy. The Atalaya, that neighboring eminence whose security Santa Anna had disregarded, was carried on this first day by Twiggs's division, after an eager and spirited assault, which showed the Mexican commander his error when too late to have it rectified; and under shelter of the mountain crest they reposed for the night, heavy guns being brought up with difficulty to strengthen their position. The battle next day was a general engagement; Scott's order issued the evening before, showed his perfect confidence that he could drive the Mexicans from their posi-

April 18.

tion, and almost indeed to the letter was that order carried out. The columns moved early to the attack, earning a success speedy and decisive. Pillow's brigade twice assaulted the right of the Mexican intrenchment, and though compelled to retire, did their intended part by distracting and disconcerting the enemy. In the centre Colonel Riley's brigade pushed against Santa Anna's main body whenever advantage was offered. Shields's brigade bravely assailed the left, carrying the rear battery on the Jalapa road, and making the final rout of the foe complete,—Shields receiving a wound, which devolved his command upon Colonel Baker. But the most brilliant part of this whole battle, and that to which these other movements were subsidiary, fell to the division under Twiggs, shared more particularly by a portion of the 1st artillery, the 3d and 7th infantry, and the rifles, all under temporary command of Colonel Harney. Their work was to storm the mountain stronghold from the elevation gained the day before. Upward and onward this brigade scaled the long and arduous slope of Cerro Gordo, unsheltered from the terrific fire of artillery and musketry, with a steadiness which would have done honor to the veterans of a hundred battles, and reaching the breastworks turned the enemy to flight, planted their colors by the side of the Mexican flag, and after a short and sharp firing, carried their conquest by the bayonet. Outflanked and outgeneraled pitilessly, the Mexican soldiery fled in a rout,—Santa Anna with Generals Canalizo and Ampudia and some six or eight thousand men making their narrow escape toward Jalapa just as Cerro Gordo was carried, and before Twiggs's division could reach the high road to cut off their retreat. No sooner was the fate of the day decided than Scott sent a cavalry detachment several miles in hot pursuit with field-batteries, and many Mexicans were slain or captured in the chase. Scott's loss in killed and wounded at Cerro Gordo was severe, but that of the enemy, as usual, much greater.*

* See 2 Scott's Memoirs, 430–451; 8 H. H. Bancroft, 455–458. The American loss in two days was four hundred and thirty-one in killed,

This second military disaster, following upon the heels of his boastful fulminations, aroused at the Mexican capital a bitter distrust of Santa Anna, whose reputation and political audacity, nevertheless, enabled him to keep still his ascendancy at home and in the field. With obstinate zeal he soon engaged in gathering another great army, infusing into it his own sanguine hopes of victory, and fortifying the capital's lovely suburbs with works which he fancied were impregnable. Vain exploits of inferior science ! Through all dark tribulation the spirit of the Mexican people was admirable ; a noble cause ennobles fight, "though death's pale horse lead on the chase."

In the mean time Scott plumed along the high road a conqueror ; and proceeding by easy marches, his forces peaceably occupied Jalapa, Perote (whose formidable castle fired not a gun), and Puebla. In this last picturesque city of thriving manufactures, located near the centre of a fertile and lovely valley which abounded in cereals and orchard fruits, and whose slopes revealed a sublime horizon bounded before him by the twin peaks of Popocatapetl and Iztaccihuatl, whose gleaming snows gave them a dove-like aspect, and behind by lonely Orizaba, — close, too, to the desolate plain of that other mountain where once stood the Aztec city of Cholula, of whose recorded greatness not a vestige remained but its old brick pyramid, the ancient relict of a thousand years, — here Scott halted with his confident army, reviving the scenes of the Cortes invasion and waiting, with patience somewhat taxed, for tardy re-enforcements. Scott's mistrust that his government meant to mortify him was increased by the arrival of Nicholas B. Trist, chief clerk of the State Department, and confidential agent of the Polk cabinet at military headquarters. For in spite of rebuffs, our President clung to the idea that the Mexicans would purchase a peace sooner than die for their country, or that their leaders at least were corruptible. Trist bore

wounded, and missing. That of the Mexicans (which Scott computed at about one thousand) has never been officially ascertained. About three thousand Mexican prisoners were captured.

with him the project of a treaty drawn up by Secretary Buchanan to use if advantage offered. Not realizing the sensitive state of Scott's feelings, and disregarding, perhaps, the delicate precautions his employers had impressed

^{May.} upon him, our roving diplomatist upon reaching

Vera Cruz forwarded to the general-in-chief a packet addressed to the Mexican minister of foreign relations, sealed and with its contents unexplained,—transmitting at the same time, by way of credential, a mysterious letter from the Secretary of War, which seemed to convey that whenever contingencies should occur of which the bearer would inform him, Scott would suspend hostilities. The general's temper was ruffled in a moment. "I entreat," he wrote home to the Secretary, "to be spared the personal dishonor of being again required to obey the orders of the chief clerk of the State department."* After some fierce epistolary interchange with Trist, who could handle a sharp pen on his own behalf when provoked to controversy, Scott was mollified by new instructions from Washington, and the peacemaker and warmaker soon co-operated with something like harmony and reconciliation. As for the Mexican disposition, however, Trist found it at first as hard to handle as ever did Slidell the year before. He got his secret packet into the enemy's hands through the channel of the British legation, after Scott had declined point blank to handle it, and thus notified the Mexican minister that he brought full power to conclude a treaty. The Mexican

^{June.} Congress, dreading to incur odium, appear to have put the initial responsibility upon Santa Anna, for his secret agents now began to arrive at Puebla. Embarrassed most probably by his own responsibility, he took a wily and adroit course with our commissioner, so as to secure for his country one of two advantages,—either a treaty of peace positively beneficial or a delay of hostilities long enough to gain time for defensive preparations. Indeed his present and more immediate object

* 2 Scott's Memoirs, 578.

seems to have been the latter; for after leading both Trist and our commander, through private agents, to consent that they would give a bribe for what they wanted,—the real point in fact to which so much of Polk's Mexican diplomacy had been directed,—he gave them to understand that before he could safely appoint commissioners to sue for peace, the American army must advance to his country's capital and carry one of its outworks.*

Scott's warlike preparations had not relaxed during this unpleasant episode. Re-enforcements arrived at Puebla through the summer,—detachments under Lieutenant-Colonel McIntosh, Generals Cadwallader and Pillow, and finally, by August 6th, a fresh brigade of twenty-five hundred strong commanded by Franklin Pierce, a ^{August.} brigadier-general lately commissioned as a Democrat in high favor. After Benton's haughty refusal of an appointment which would not place him first in the field,† Pillow had been commissioned as first of the new major-generals, and Quitman second,—volunteer officers both of them, in good party affiliation, and brave soldiers besides. Scott's invading army thus strengthened now proceeded upon the interior march from Puebla to Mexico City with an ample and imposing staff; Harney's brigade of light dragoons, and four divisions of infantry, supported by artillery, which Worth, Twiggs, Pillow, and Quitman, respectively commanded. Both Worth and Twiggs were regular officers and major-generals by brevet, the former a high-strung but gallant officer, with Southern sympathies and acutely sensitive of the honors due to his rank. Scott's whole available force now numbered about eleven thousand two hundred, after allowing for those on garrison duty and the sick list. The march, which began from Puebla between the 7th and 10th of August, was conducted with each of the four divisions a day apart but within supporting distance. Apprehending the greater perils

* See 2 Ripley, 148-170; H. Ex. Doc. 60, 30th Cong. 1st Sess.; 8 H. H. Bancroft, 463-467; 72 Niles, 326; 73 Niles, 214.

† See vol. iv. p. 543.

now to be encountered, Scott appreciated, too, the responsibility of such an enterprise, and the recuperative energy and vigilance of his chief opponent. Santa Anna's ability for administering, and his power to create and organize were indeed admirable; but as Scott has correctly noted, he on the field of battle, though not deficient in personal courage, failed in quickness of perception and the rapidity to combine.* Though looked for, at the latest, among the defiles of Rio Frio, where the ascent of the road grew steepest, he had preferred to test his fate among the serpent-like line of barriers, natural and artificial, which now coiled about the capital city, as impregnable to assault as four months of his best toil and supervision could make them.

No one who descends for the first time by the flank of volcanic Popocatapetl, that tallest of Mexican peaks, whose snowy crest gleams through the bright atmosphere under the rays of a tropical sun, and who reaches that point in the road where a first glimpse is revealed of the broad valley of Mexico studded with water mirrors, over which the well-built city of the Montezumas rears its head, once dedicated to idolatrous worship, but now the capital of an emulous republic struggling with calamity, can escape the oppression of sad thoughts. Scott felt and pictured well the impressiveness of the scene, and his emotions of mingled pride and pity were not very different from those which Cortes felt when this great plain, which nature wished always to smile upon, teemed with populous cities instead of being, as our army now beheld it, ill-cared for and for the most part a barren waste.†

The detailed operations of the next crowded month, leading, like all other such operations, to a triumph of our arms too easy for popular rejoicing, interest chiefly the students of military science. We shall sketch them rapidly, — premising that, of course, Scott conducted them with the skill and precision for which

* 2 Scott's Memoirs, 466.

† See Scott's Memoirs, 467; Waddy Thompson's Recollections, c. 4.

every day added to his renown. Viewing the enemy's works at leisure, he concluded to turn the strong eastern defences of Mexico City by manœuvring to the south and southwest. His orders still gave forecast of the work to be done, and his consecutive reports furnish a clear and even graphic narrative. Santa Anna, who had chiefly relied for defence upon his eastern works found himself outgeneralled and disconcerted. Warm work began soon after the middle of August, when, after some preparatory marching by General Worth, our forces, under the lead of General Pillow, advanced towards Contreras, some six miles from the capital, where Santa Anna and the Mexicans, emerging from behind their strong defences, assailed them with great fury. The morning of the 20th opened with a series of brilliant achievements, all in view of the capital, which Scott recounted as the "battles of Mexico."* On that day Contreras with its works was carried after a stubborn fight, and one road was opened to the capital.† Three other triumphs equally brilliant signalized this day. One was the forcing of San Antonio, a well garrisoned village, on the direct road to the capital; and by this second success a shorter and easier road for our heavy trains was opened to the capital. The other triumphs were about Cherubusco, a hamlet of scattered houses, above which bristled, besides a fortified convent, the great stone citadel of defence, with massive walls and parapets, a field-work intervening at the head of a bridge over which the road from San Antonio conducted to the capital. It was at these strongholds that the Mexicans rallied in full force for a desperate stand after the earlier defeats of the day,—their feebler defences at the city gates being scarcely four miles in the rear. Against Twiggs the convent's solid masonry had repelled an hour's assault, when Worth and Pillow, having finished their earlier exploits, began manœuvring close upon the bridge. The brigades of Garland and Cadwalla-

* 2 Scott, 469–477, with official reports.

† Ib., 482; 8 H. H. Bancroft, c. 18.

der soon carried the field-work at the bayonet's point, capturing its guns and ammunition. This was the third great triumph of the day; and the fourth and crowning one which followed was the capture of the convent, from whose loopholes, befitting a sure abode of the church militant, and from outer wall, choice sharpshooters of the enemy pointed their muskets, while loud cannon belched destruction. Mexican endurance was not proof against calamities; and as their failure at Contreras had weakened San Antonio, and that at San Antonio the fight at the bridge, so the combined force of the day's successive disasters disheartened the defenders of Cherubusco, immense as seemed their numbers and their last stronghold to our assaulting force.* After an artillery fire of twenty minutes more, white flags were thrown out from the sombre walls in all directions, and the convent surrendered. To this fourth might be added still another victorious exploit of the day,—two brigades, partly composed of volunteers, operating under General Shields, a little in the rear of Cherubusco, to outflank the enemy's retreat and fighting well against superior numbers.† The grand results of this day were terribly disastrous to the enemy; three thousand Mexican prisoners were taken, including many officers of rank; four thousand of all ranks were killed or wounded, entire corps being dispersed and dissolved; and more than treble the ordnance of the invading force was captured, together with small arms and ammunition supplies of every kind. But the American loss in these splendid assaults was not inconsiderable, their killed and wounded making a total of about one fourth of the loss inflicted upon the foe.‡

* Scott estimated the whole Mexican force in, on the flanks, or within supporting distance of these works at twenty-seven thousand. Mexican authorities (plainly inaccurate) reckoned the force at only nine thousand. See 2 Scott, 487; 8 H. H. Bancroft (with citations), 482.

† It was in the course of this last movement that General Pierce, exhausted from a hurt of the evening before, fainted in action and was borne from the field.

‡ For a fuller narrative see Scott's official reports, printed in 2 Scott, c. 31; also 8 H. H. Bancroft, c. 18. Scott's tactics have been blamed by

The patriot defenders of Mexico were by this time much demoralized, and had Scott pressed on instantly to the city walls, the capital might perhaps have succumbed without further resistance. But prudence puts a limit to enterprises physically exhausting on either side, while humanity pleads that the spirit of bloodthirstiness and atrocity be always kept under rein. Both Scott and the peace commissioner who accompanied him had been repeatedly admonished from home not to scatter the elements of negotiation by too rigorous a warfare, but to conquer a peace and with it a mutual compact as between sovereign and independent powers. It was for Trist to essay once more his soothing skill. Four days sufficed for concluding an armistice, and Santa

August 21-24.

Anna from within the walls of the capital appears to have made the first overture * towards negotiation. The adroitness, tact, and energy of that consummate politician did not desert him in this darkest hour; nor had his people ceased yet to trust his guidance. While signifying his wish to accommodate, and flattering Polk's representatives, as he had done before, into the belief that he was as base and avaricious as they desired him to be, Santa Anna appears to have labored no less assiduously to convince his own countrymen that he had not given up the fight, but merely wished time to recuperate and to make his inner defences stronger. Negotiations now occupied the space of two weeks, in the course of which Trist produced before the Mexican commissioners who came to treat with him the treaty project which he had brought August 24-with him from Washington. By that project our September 6.

some writers because he butted his forces so heavily against the strong outworks of Cherubusco instead of turning aside and marching to the capital by another road. See 8 H. H. Bancroft, 483. Had our assault here been long-protracted or unsuccessful, encouraging instead of depressing in effect on the spirits of the enemy, the criticism would have been more pertinent.

* 8 H. H. Bancroft, 490, and 2 Scott, 499, are contradictory on this point.

government asked, with such salve for Mexican honor as more money might afford, a formal cession of all the territory lying east and north of the Rio Grande, the southern boundary line of New Mexico, and the Gila and Colorado rivers; or, in other words, a surrender not only of Texas, as Texan interlopers had defined it, but also the full domain of New Mexico and of Upper California,—in fine, of that goodly half of the Mexican dominions which Polk's administration had at the outset purposed finally to acquire, whether money or bloodshed could obtain it.* Great, however, was Trist's discomfiture when the commissioners of Santa Anna, after professing to have deliberated, unrolled the scroll of their counter project, embodying the substance of his ultimatum,—to sell, namely, to the United States the Mexican Texas lying east of the river Nueces, leaving that belt between the Nueces and the Rio Grande as a neutral frontier; to negotiate for running the parallel of 37° to the Pacific ocean, close to San Francisco; requiring full indemnity for the war, the restoration of all captured forts, and a solemn promise, besides, from the United States never to permit any more Mexican soil to be annexed.† These certainly were not terms for a vanquished people to offer, and the Mexican commissioners were doubtless insincere in proposing them. The truce now ended, though not before Scott had perceived infractions on the other side, and that Santa Anna had recommenced strengthening his military defences the moment his ultimatum was decided upon, without giving his adversary the slightest notice.‡ Worth was now ordered to make a night descent at Molino del Rey, about a mile from the armistice headquarters at

Septem- Tacubaya, and near the western base of Chapul-
ber 7, 8. tepec hill. To seize here some stores of powder,
and destroy a cannon foundry was Scott's first object.
A stone castle bristled on the heights of Chapulte-
pec, overlooking both the foundry and the city, and

* See vol. iv. p. 498. † U. S. Docs. 30th Cong. 1st Sess. H. Ex. 40.

‡ 2 Scott, 504; 8 H. H. Bancroft, c. 19.

threatening to dispute our passage. Upon close examination, Worth, finding his task too difficult for a midnight raid, was permitted to defer the attack until daylight, and re-enforcements were sent him. At sunrise he opened fire on the foundry, and a forenoon's hot fight followed, with wavering success; the plunging fire of Chapultepec encouraging the Mexicans, while it diminished the confidence of the assailants in an advantage to be gained from this exploit. Our troops fought gallantly, and Worth gained the object he was sent for; but it was at the cost of a deadlier contention than Scott had expected, and a loss proportionately greater on our side than in any other fight during this war. Never before nor after did the Mexicans fight us to so good advantage. Indeed, Santa Anna and his annalists, interpreting Worth's movements to mean the storming of Chapultepec, instead of the meagre operation to which Scott's orders had confined him, hailed this battle as their own veritable triumph. The church bells pealed joyfully from their beleaguered capital, and in coming time medals and monuments were bestowed by a grateful country in honor of what the republic commemorates to this day as a victory.*

Molino del Rey was followed by another series of brilliant and difficult operations, which sealed the military results of the war. The city of Mexico occupied a slight swell of ground near the centre of an irregular basin, girdled in its greater extent with a ditch, or deep navigable canal, difficult to bridge; and eight entrance gates over arches Scott found defended by a system of strong works which proper skill and resources might have rendered almost impregnable against him. All the southern approaches near the city were over elevated causeways, cut already to oppose him, and flanked by other ditches and marshy meadows, less overflowed than was usual at this season. Determining to avoid this latter network of obstacles, so as to economize the lives of his troops, Scott resolved to seek another approach, more September 11.

* See 2 Scott, 505 (official report); 8 H. H. Bancroft, 497-505, where the losses on both sides are reckoned.

favorable, by a sudden inversion to the southwest and west, at the same time making it appear a feint, and keeping the enemy's mind diverted to the point which he first threatened. This stratagem succeeded by movements executed during the next two days, until it was too late for

Septem-
ber 12, 13. the foe to recover from their delusion. Chapultepec's massive and isolated height, whose guns had lately poured their fire unchallenged, was now assailed in earnest. A heavy bombardment and cannonade commenced early on the 12th, and was kept up leisurely until nightfall. To Pillow and Quitman were assigned the prominent parts for the following morning; Worth reserving his division to support the former, and General Persifer Smith the latter. Twiggs's guns boomed meanwhile from a distance, threatening the southern gates of the capital, and holding the main corps of Mexican soldiery on the defensive. On the morning of the 13th the storming of Chapultepec followed on the west and southeast sides, and the conspicuous daring of former fights was repeated with like reward. Emerging from woods which concealed their earlier approach, our storming parties drove the Mexican guards before them, and then advanced straight in the face of mounted guns and of ramparts lined with musketry. Disdaining shelter, they carried their colors to the very walls, over which they rushed with a shout as soon as a few ladders could be placed in position. The Mexicans fled in wild panic and dismay, rushing over the walls and down the precipices, while musket-shots flew from man to man, and strong buildings fell in a mass of ruins covered with the dead and dying. Among exciting scenes like these,—Worth's division now taking one unexpected road to the city, and Quitman's another, while the unfortunate patriot defenders were driven in great confusion from one point of resistance to another until forced within the city walls,—the Mexican capital was reached before night-fall, and Scott's army gained possession of two gates,—Quitman in his ardor pressing inside and sheltering his men as best he might from the guns of the last formidable citadel which was yet to be taken. But here the invading opera-

tions ended. Early the next morning, while it was yet dark, a deputation of the municipal council waited upon our general-in-chief to report that the authorities of the republic had fled with Santa Anna's army from the capital at dead of night, and to capitulate on behalf of themselves and the inhabitants. Wrathful at this escape, Scott refused to sign any capitulation, but declared he would enter as soon as daylight permitted him. He did so without resistance; though there was some casual firing from the flat roofs and windows of the houses by Mexican convicts, just liberated, and disbanded soldiers. In vain, and for the last time, the new republic had resisted by force of arms the fatal aggressions of her elder and superior sister. Scott's victories gained the climax of military success, which Taylor had so well inaugurated. The mingled descendants of proud conquerors and conquered Indians succumbed in humiliation to the second Cortes. The grand plaza which the invading Spaniard had himself laid out in the sixteenth century saw the strange spectacle of American troops marching to the music of their national airs during the imposing entry of their majestic commander; over the National Palace, once the proud site of the Montezumas, opposite the rich Cathedral that now supplanted the old temple of idolatrous sacrifice, were hoisted the American stars and stripes; and the second conquest of Mexico passed into history.*

Septem-
ber 14.

SECTION III.

PERIOD OF THIRTIETH CONGRESS.

MARCH 4, 1847—MARCH 3, 1849.

SULLEN and dissatisfied had dispersed our Twenty-ninth Congress after a final session of acrimonious debate and scanty legislation.† The responsibility, no less than

* See, for narratives and details of these last military events, 2 Scott's Memoirs, c. 32; 8 H. H. Bancroft, 506–523, and authorities cited.

† See vol. iv. pp. 540–544.

1847. the odium of the war, this body had laid heavily upon the shoulders of the President and his cabinet, to work the situation out as best they might with the means afforded them. One act of the Senate near the close of the session was to reject Polk's nomination of Charles J. Ingersoll for minister to France, who was a partisan of unquestioned ability, but false and malicious; and the venerable Richard Rush was finally selected. At the adjournment no brilliant operations in the field were reported, and the public mind swung in painful suspense, between fresh hopes of achievement from Scott's new expedition and forebodings that Taylor's diminished army was in great jeopardy. Distant rumors which reached Washington after the adjournment of Congress and about the middle of March, increased the general anxiety on this latter point. All bulletins arriving from our far-off seat of war reached New Orleans by gulf steamers, and were thence conveyed by one slow means or another through or around the cotton States, until they reached the Potomac and our seat of government, whence the "magnetic telegraph" and enterprising Northern journals would disseminate the news among the people. In this manner came the first rumor that a great battle fought at Saltillo had ended in a reverse to our arms and a retreat. But a different rumor soon after succeeded; and just before April sped the full tidings right joyfully of Taylor's splendid though costly victory at Buena Vista. In comparison with this glorious intelligence, the bombardment

April. and capture of Vera Cruz, announced shortly after, made little excitement, for the news followed the public reaction from gloom to exultation. Cerro Gordo and the other brilliant successes which attended Scott's progress were heralded in later months after the worst anxiety of the war had ceased.

Zachary Taylor, "the general who never surrenders," now grew every day as the hero of the people, having taken the boldest and best course for his own vindication after the government deserted him. On the first day

of April the *New York Courier and Enquirer* hoisted his name for next President, and other ^{April-July.} presses and local conventions opposed to the administration were not slow to follow. His biography and portrait were announced in cheap and taking style by rival dealers; "rough and ready" almanacs came out; and Taylor's name was presently toasted and applauded wherever Mexico was mentioned at a public dinner. These earlier demonstrations in his favor were spontaneous rather than under the sanction of politicians in full Whig communion, for the popular current had set strongly in favor of new men and new policies, through disaffection with existing parties. Yet the Whigs of Iowa had nominated Taylor for President a week before the news came of Buena Vista's battle; and when these Taylor meetings began to be held, some Kentuckian observed in a remark which sagacious Whigs often quoted, that the General would be elected President "by spontaneous combustion." Taylor showed excellent traits. In a speech made by Jefferson Davis, one of his sons-in-law and a colonel upon his staff, whose valor shone in Buena Vista, the old man's points of character were well described: courage in danger, affection for his men, and honest simplicity. Not a soldier in Taylor's command but loved him; he was the poor man's sympathizing friend, and the eye so stern in battle could be suffused with tenderness.*

But the leading Whigs drew slowly to Taylor, and only as they felt the increasing necessity of doing so. Henry Clay was the idol still of their intelligent majority, in spite of past defeat. Horace Greeley and his *Tribune* nursed with pathetic devotion the broken hopes of the old leader, and sternly refused all overtures from friends of the military candidate, to whom objection was made that he was equally a slaveholder with Clay, and besides, a warrior destitute of civil experience and fixed political principles, in the questions which agitated the country a dumb oracle, and hardly a Whig at all.

* Newspapers of the day, May-July, 1847; 72 Niles, 97, etc.

Clay had lost a son, his own namesake, in the fight of Buena Vista, and a letter from the General, touchingly expressed, condoled with him in his sorrow. Long retired from public affairs, earning a new sobriquet as the farmer of Ashland, very gradually after his disastrous campaign of 1844 did this old champion of the Whig party gird up anew the loins of his prostrate ambition. A few among his legion of personal friends had, in the meantime, and with scrupulous delicacy, relieved his pecuniary needs, and placed him in easy circumstances for the rest of his life. Clay was now in his seventieth year, practising in a desultory way his profession, and upon infrequent occasions of health or business, managing to visit New Orleans or the eastern cities, where his presence, always welcomed, was quite likely to elicit some public expression. This summer, joining the Church, he became a Christian by profession; his proud spirit was chastened and he kept it so. This same summer, anxious Whig delegations began urging him to address the people upon the grave topics

^{November} of the day. Clay at length complied; and in

13. a speech which he delivered at Lexington, before his Kentuckian neighbors, but which was printed and circulated far and wide, and read in every State and, one might almost say, in every village and hamlet of the Union.* This Lexington speech gave, as the orator meant it should, the key-note of Whig opposition for the new Congress about to assemble. Its theme was the unnatural war with Mexico, and its text the prophecy of Clay's Raleigh letter of 1844, already fulfilled, that, in the case of Texas, "annexation and war were identical." Reciting the events which had transpired since that utterance, he arraigned the set in power with that scathing eloquence which was his peculiar distinction, and yet as one who felt that his autumn had come. His argument was epitomized in a series of resolutions which his Lexington hearers unanimously adopted. These

* Colton's Last Years of Clay, c. 1, 2.

resolutions set forth that the Mexican War had been brought on by deceit and unrighteousness, and yet its prosecution had now become a national concern; that Congress ought by some authentic act to declare the objects of this war, and control the President in his prosecution of it; that any such purpose as the wholesale annexation of Mexico (for such, by many excluded from the confidence of government, was supposed to be the plan) ought to be opposed under all circumstances, and especially the present; that, considering our splendid series of victories, the United States ought to practise the virtues of moderation and magnanimity, requiring no dismemberment of the Mexican republic, but only a just and proper fixation of the limits of Texas; and that we should disclaim all "wish or desire on our part to acquire any foreign territory whatever, for the purpose of propagating slavery, or of introducing slaves from the United States." Fellow-citizens of the Union were further counselled to assemble in local meetings of their own and declare their opinions on the same subject.* Following that last suggestion, public meetings were held in New York and various other cities and towns, which indorsed these sentiments and with the Whig presses lauded Clay's speech as one which gave back to the people their own thoughts.

Admirable as was all this public expression, and generous as Clay's speech sounded, when coming from the lips of a slaveholder whose hearers and personal associates were slaveholders also, close scrutiny must detect that with all this indulgence of invective, this reprobation of slavery, this plea for generous treatment of our foe, Clay, with his habitual desire to make a platform broad enough for all good men to stand upon, left the lines of practical policy in the present instance a little undefined. He did not insist, as Corwin had done before

* Colton's Last Years of Clay, c. 3; 2 Schurz's Clay, c. 25; 73 Niles, 190, 198.

the Senate in his glowing speech of the late session, or as Winthrop had just expressed himself in a Faneuil Hall speech, pitched to Webster's earlier expression, that this war should be stopped where it was. Neither had he squarely placed himself upon the radical dogma of the Wilmot Proviso, though the bearing of his resolutions seemed certainly in that direction. By this time Scott's entrance into the Mexican capital had been bulletined, and it was felt that the sister republic lay prostrate at our feet and at our mercy. Webster, on the Senate floor had already proposed that no territory should be annexed at all, his plea being that this Union was scarcely powerful enough or virtuous enough to bear the weight of the acquisition.* Such a proposal, as events moved, was only more Quixotic than that of Clay's Lexington resolutions, which allowed a moderate annexation. The one great plan which fitted the political situation, that which gave the whole humane North and all opposers of this war common ground to unite upon, against the greed of slavery extension in which the war originated, was the Wilmot Proviso,—the provision that all territory to be acquired from Mexico should be forever consecrated to freedom. This Wilmot Proviso was the one glorious idea engendered of the Twenty-ninth Congress.† It offered to mediate between Whigs and the conscience Democrats. It proposed a sort of national penance and self-discipline for the sins already committed against a fellow-race and a neighboring republic. If adopted in season it must surely have stopped the wheels of war short of violent dismemberment. And not having been so adopted, it still offered the solid, the single political means of uniting the honest anti-slavery and anti-slave-propagating sentiment of the whole country, at the perilous crisis, upon legitimate and constitutional ground, most available and most essential to Congress. It was this practical adaptiveness to the times, whether the war stopped or whether it went on, whether acquisition

* 72 Niles, 39, 73.

† Vol. iv. p. 543.

or no acquisition resulted, that made the Wilmot Proviso flame in the skies like Constantine's cross, so instantly hailed with delight through the more populous range of the Union, though cursed by slave propagandists in the remote South. How stirring and courageous had been the resolutions passed by the legislatures of so many Northern States this year, and submitted to Congress, — by Massachusetts, Vermont, New York, and Michigan, for example, — which pledged resistance to any new territorial annexation of territory to the Union except for freedom. But close upon the heels of adjournment came a concert of Southern interests to oppose that idea. South Carolina began bristling earnestly against the proviso, when Calhoun, in his memorable speech at Charleston, demanded for slavery equal rights in the new territories, and urged the fellow-planters of his section to form a party for perpetuating their institution, making that object paramount to all others. The resolutions of this same Charleston meeting, passed unanimously, at his instance, warned the Union that the South meant to extend slavery over at least one half of the territory to be acquired from Mexico and would maintain its equal rights at all hazards. From self-admiring Virginia came resolutions of milder scope but similar fibre. "Let us alone," wrote Governor Brown, of Mississippi, in a public letter, defining the Southern attitude; "the South must be united;" abolitionism must be resisted. No supporter of the Wilmot Proviso, declared the *Richmond Enquirer*, can receive the support of the Southern democracy for President.*

March,
April.

March 9.

Of this famous Wilmot Proviso, David Wilmot, rural Pennsylvanian and Democrat of the last and the next House was unquestionably the author; or at least was author of an adaptation.† Not only did colleagues and

* 72 Niles, *passim*.

† Vol. iv. p 543. The language of the Wilmot Proviso closely follows the Ordinance of 1787, but adapts its language to the existing emergency.

1847. contemporaries allow him whatever fame might accrue from giving to so important a proposal the prefix of his name, but he lectured this year and spoke in various meetings and conventions of other States for the cause, where he was introduced as "author of the proviso." At one of these meetings, in New York State, he related how he had first suggested the idea in a dinner-table conversation, and upon the approval of two friends, submitted it to a larger council of Democrats, and then, with their united assent, proposed it to the House as a rider to the war appropriation bill.* "There goes the proviso," gallery visitors at the capitol would whisper in these days, while the House was in session, pointing to a stout Dutch-built man of moderate height, with light hair and eyes, smooth face and florid complexion, who moved among the desks, slightly conscious of attracting notice, with no terrifying countenance. But Wilmot, though brave and honorable, was not a great nor a growing man, and Whig statesmen whose endowments were surpassingly greater showed envy of this Democrat's renown. The medicine nauseated them with such a label. "It is not their thunder," said Webster of the Democrats, in his speech at the Massachusetts convention this year,—more than insinuating that he was the Jove whose bolts had been stolen; and again in the 1848 campaign, his figurative speech denounced this appropriation of Whig ideas as savoring of petty larceny; and finally, in 1850, when about to desert the good ground altogether, he contemptuously declared that the Wilmot Proviso was "no shibboleth for him."† Reproach like this suited better the argument of counsel in a patent infringement suit than that of a statesman. A great principle should be saluted for the good that is in it. Beneficent ideas in legislation are dedicated and belong to the whole public; they are not for the special profit and monopoly of the individual or the set that invent

* New York Tribune, Oct. 29, 1847.

† Lodge's Webster, 293; 2 Curtis's Webster, c. 34; newspapers of 1848.

them, but may be used by any political party to promote the general good. But party pride and party prejudice are inveterate; and accordingly it will not surprise us that the Wilmot Proviso died out in a few years, when the doctrine enfolded in its shell lost popularity. That doctrine, in a more striking, more sweeping, and more presentable form, was the extension to all national territory of the Ordinance of 1787,—Jefferson's Ordinance, the Ordinance of Freedom,—that sacred decree, penned perhaps in its perfected draft by a Dane or a Rufus King, but whose first inspiration came from Virginia and the slaveholders. Brought forward, as this narrative will show, under later circumstances of national stress and peril and offence to the free sentiment of the majority, this Wilmot Proviso, with its new and better name, rallied and reunited the North in a crusade for the right, and at length forced the path to victory,—to a victory which resistance made only the more overwhelming and final.

The Northern dissensions which the Mexican War bred in our democracy, and the whole crafty policy of the administration portended political disaster. Those dissensions widened rapidly under the wedge of the Wilmot Proviso; in New York State, more especially, where Marcy's influence was that of a "hunker" or "hard shell" (to apply the cant term of the day) and could not reconcile the "softs" or "barnburners" who inclined to anti-slavery views and the leadership of Silas Wright. Wright's death this year, after the failure to re-elect him governor, was a serious blow to Democrats of the latter class, and a calamity to all citizens, irrespective of party, who had resolved that a barrier must be opposed to the further usurpations of slavery. Polk's administration, which owed much to this man, had rendered him little; aware that his steadfast soul disapproved of its policy, and that the anti-slavery element of the country turned to him for next President. "The Wilmot Proviso," wrote Horace Greeley in an obituary sketch, "owes more to Silas Wright than to any other

August 27.

man; he was the soul and centre of the influence that held so many of his party steadfast through the trials of last winter.” *

The administration lost ground in many State elections of this year. New York furnished an important instance. Among Wright’s friends and those who revered his memory was Azariah Flagg, the comptroller, who had guarded the State treasury so sedulously that many canal contractors and other claimants were his personal enemies. The “hunkers” threw him over in the regular party convention, and put forward new men for the other subordinate State offices whose election came in September. In this same convention they rejected John Van Buren, the ex-President’s son, as a delegate, and voted down all approval of the Wilmot Proviso. But the “barnburners,” holding their own convention at Herkimer, pronounced for “free trade, free speech, free labor, and free soil.” The Whig convention desired “no more territory unless it is free.” The “dough-face” ticket of the first October. November. convention lost and anti-administration candidates won by good majorities,—Hamilton Fish being chosen lieutenant-governor, and Millard Fillmore leading the list with nearly 40,000 votes above his competitor as Flagg’s successor. For the first time in six years the State government was now Whig in every department except the judiciary, Young having been chosen governor over Silas Wright in the November preceding.

Other Democratic States between March and November proclaimed their disaffection. New Hampshire, which

* New York Tribune, Aug. 28, 1847. This does not mean that Silas Wright had any claim to be considered the author of the Wilmot Proviso. See Wright’s own letter, written April 15, which endorses “the Wilmot Proviso, as I understand it.” Hammond’s Life of Wright, 714. And see Preston King’s credit of authorship to Wilmot, ib. 705. Benton was one of those who had named Silas Wright for next President.

had given Polk more than 9000 over Clay in 1844,—the largest Presidential vote, in proportion, that he received in any State but one,—re-elected a Democratic governor by a very narrow margin, and had not the Democrats representing it in Congress voted for the Wilmot Proviso against the President's wishes, there would probably have been no re-election at all. A later Congressional contest brought it apparently to an independent attitude in national affairs. Connecticut discharged its loco-foco governor and installed a Whig. Tennessee, the State of Jackson and Polk, whose illusions had vanished, swung from a Democratic Brown to a Whig of the same surname. Northern Whig States all the while stood firmly by their candidates,—the Vermont Whig convention pronouncing among the earliest for “free territory or none.” The people of Wisconsin, rejecting the proposed State constitution, chose to remain longer in the territorial condition, despite the late act of admission proffered by Congress. “No more slave territory in any event” was louder still the slogan of the North. As autumn drew on, the elections for Congress made it more and more apparent that the next House would leave the administration in a minority. Hence the tone of popular discussion was in louder dissonance with the President's policy. Let us stop supplies, it was now urged; let us feed no longer this insatiate demon of war as we have been doing, unless the President can make out a case showing that hostilities are prosecuted for no purpose of making a new acquisition, but simply for the safety of the Union.* Iowa's first legislative election as a State went, to the surprise of both national parties, against the administration.† In one respect, at least, concerning this war, Northern sentiment strongly coincided; and that was, in condemning the civilian part

* See, *e. g.*, Daniel Webster in Massachusetts Whig convention; 73 Niles, 104.

† 72 Niles, 149.

of the administration, which had shown the appetite of a wolf and the heart of a stag.

Of this swelling tide of obloquy and condemnation Polk himself was well aware. But he opened not his lips to the people to justify himself, nor (so far as history is aware) gave an explanation more candid to party friends than what his public messages reveal. Secretiveness was his constant habit. That he felt anxious and troubled, however, was certain even at the climax of those brilliant victories which his generals had wrested from Mexico so far away. The disaffection, from one cause or another, of leaders of opinion like Calhoun, Wright, and Benton, was a sore vexation to him.* He now sought to rally his jaded spirits, and to recruit, if possible, political strength, by taking a pilgrimage to the Eastern States, as so many of his predecessors had done. After an excursion to Raleigh and his May, June. native State he returned to Washington, and then began the main journey, accompanied by members of his cabinet. Philadelphia, New York, and Boston were visited, and his tour extended into the State of Maine as far eastward as Augusta and Gardiner. The farther the President travelled the greater grew the ceremony and the less the enthusiasm. New York itself, that misgoverned citadel of Democratic strength, had just chosen a mayor of opposite politics, and its Whig common council begrudged even a moderate appropriation for entertaining the highest potentate in America. Here too, the 7th of May had been celebrated by an illumination for our national victories in Mexico, and the second day after in mourning over the fallen dead; and the latter occasion, the more impressive of the two, lingered like a suppressed anathema. While Polk's reception in this city did not fail in decorum, the curiosity of the

* Benton had scarcely declined his major-general's commission when he came out in a public letter, calling upon the people of Oregon to stand by their fundamental act copied from the Ordinance of 1787. Newspapers of the day.

people was greater than their applause. Tammany initiated the President into their order, but he pleaded fatigue for shortening the ceremonies, and the same plea sheltered him from various other demonstrations on the route. His speeches, where he made any, and his personal appearance, recalled the circuit preacher more than the lawyer or public man; his elocution was sedate and dry, interspersed with many a "sir" and Southern peculiarities of enunciation. But it was chiefly observed by those who had known him in the past that he seemed actually borne down by the cares of supreme office; and that two years of the Presidency had made him an old man. Back at his post in early July, ^{July-} he was reported much better in health and spir- ^{September.} its; but a few weeks later he was known to be ill again, in spite of close secrecy at the White House; and only the knowledge of his abstemious habits and system in all things allayed the anxiety of his cabinet.*

So little credit was given to Polk for the military successes of the war, and so rapidly grew the furore for "old Zach" that almost in presence of the President, while his headquarters were in New York city, a loco-foco meeting put up Taylor for the next party candidate. The diabolism of this war, its exorbitant cost, the disgraceful plunder and dissipation of our volunteer troops at Santa Fé, these and other charges widely circulated, not to add that of duplicity towards the two chief generals, the *Washington Union*, Polk's organ, had struggled hard to refute. It had pressed the friends of the administration to call a convention early, and nominate the party candidates; it had harped upon the strain that to refuse all territorial indemnity from Mexico, or to question our own capacity to absorb into the Union whatever new domains or population might be acquired, was cowardly folly; it had appealed to the patriotism of the two great sections to compromise between Northern and Southern social systems by extending the Missouri line

* See 72 Niles; newspapers of the day.

of $36^{\circ} 30'$ to the Pacific shore. Behind such appeals and such arguments the administration took refuge. And ^{October.} with Scott's army quartered, and by this time known to be quartered, in the palace of the Montezumas, Polk and his cabinet prepared to face a hostile House, fresh from the people, with a message which should take the strongest possible ground of defence. Treaty of peace, as yet there was none to produce, to the mortification of our government, none scarcely to expect, such was the "obstinate perseverance of Mexico," so Polk's message styled it, "in protracting the war." Most of this message, indeed, was in Polk's own words, and showed that labored strain, so characteristic of him, to make points against his adversary by perverting the facts. That the review of the year in so dignified a document as the President's message to the two houses of the American Congress should be either so impartial or so reserved as not to wound the sensibilities of posterity, could not for an instant lodge in the narrow chamber of this President's nature; but (applying the poet's phrase) to party he gave what was meant for mankind. Turning the *tu quoque* upon the Whigs, in opening his narrative, he alleged that Congress "with great unanimity" had declared that "war existed by act of Mexico." He further assumed that Congress must have meant him to acquire additional territory, since deferred claims of our citizens were to be pressed for payment, and Mexico being destitute of money, could have paid them off in nothing but a territorial cession. A state of war, he continued, must abrogate pre-existing treaties, and a treaty of peace should settle all points of difference; and hence the treaty he had sought was liberal enough, because while taking more land from Mexico than our claims covered, he offered to be liberal about the war expenses and pay a round sum besides. Moreover, if we did not take from Mexico what territory we wanted, some European power would plunder her in her weakness, and that would violate the Monroe doctrine. But, after all this web of sophistry and mis-

representation, the administration was forced to confess that it had conquered without extorting an acknowledgment of defeat; that while Mexico panted in our iron grasp, and her soil was overrun by our armies, all our proposals for peace and a treaty had met with so little favor that orders had lately been sent for Trist's recall; and with a large deficit to report already for the current year, and future expenditures to estimate, whose probable millions could not easily be figured up, against which somewhat less than half a million had been screwed out at our military custom-house in Vera Cruz, the President could pledge nothing to Congress but his word that he should make no more overtures of peace at present, but wait for Mexico to initiate them.*

Such was the sentiment and such the crestfallen tone of the President's message when the Thirtieth Congress first assembled. After so "just a war" ^{December.} on our part, originating in Mexico's "invasion of the territory of Texas" and "shedding the blood of our citizens on our own soil," thereby compelling us "in self-defence to repel the invader," — after his personal willingness at every stage of the unavoidable conflict to terminate it "by a just peace" (which comprised, as he admitted, a greater acquisition from our belligerent than either our spoliation claims or the amplest boundary of Texas called for), — Polk's official conclusion was that we must appropriate the territory of Mexico permanently, and do justice to ourselves and to her people by giving her a "stable, responsible and free government under our authority;" that we must prosecute the war "with increased energy and power in the vital parts of the enemy's country;" and that in pursuance of a less forbearing policy than hitherto, we must not only draw our supplies from the enemy without paying for them, but convert her internal revenues to our own use as

* See President's message, Dec. 7, 1847; Congressional Globe; 73 Niles, 228.

we have already converted the customs, and levy contributions until her people yield to the pressure and consent to our terms.*

This long but eagerly read message of some eighteen thousand words was telegraphed to Cincinnati verbatim in sixteen hours, and published by the press of that city on Thursday morning, having been read in Congress on Tuesday. For the electric wire now operated west-
^{December 6.} ward from Philadelphia to St. Louis. At noon of Monday the 6th, a quorum met in both wings of the capitol, all but seven of the House answering to the roll. Vice-President Dallas called the Senate to order. Three ballots sufficed to organize the popular branch against the administration,— Robert C. Winthrop, of Massachusetts, being chosen speaker by 110 votes or a bare majority, against Linn Boyd and the scattering candidates. Thomas J. Campbell was elected clerk in place of French, the late incumbent. These were both Whigs and candidates of the Whig caucus. Samuel F. Vinton, of Ohio, a member of ripe years and experience in the House, who had declined to contend with Winthrop for the first prize, received with party approbation the distinction of Winthrop's selection for chairman of the ways and means, and leader upon the floor.

This was one of those epochs of popular revulsion when a high surge seems to sweep away from this chamber the familiar set. Of 228 members of the present House, less than 100 had served in the one preceding, and the proportion of new members was very great; though respectable, perhaps, when put to proof, rather than famous. In the delegations from Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina, were many of these novices; from New York, Ohio, and Kentucky, too; while from the West came several strangers of striking figure and physiognomy, all in the prime of early manhood.

One of these last was Abraham Lincoln, of Illinois, a Whig whom journalists likened to a lonely sycamore

* See President's message, Dec. 7, 1847; Congressional Globe; 73 Niles, 228.

among the forest Democracy of his State. By a singular coincidence, two men, the antipodes of one another, and destined to a world-wide renown, entered this winter the opposite portals of the capitol ; both unconscious, no doubt, of the collision time had in store for them, and, for the present conjunction, hardly passing the salute of acquaintance. These two men were Lincoln and Jefferson Davis, born in the same slave State, the one of poor-white pedigree, the latter of patrician, and taken in tender years to opposite points of the compass. Lincoln had educated himself in the bitter school of privation, while Davis's training was a military one at the cost of the general government. Two men more different in traits and physiognomy at the present time it would be hard to discover. Davis, of wiry and compact frame and medium height, combined the easy manners of a Southern gentleman whose position was assured with the firm and erect carriage of a soldier, conscious of the distinction he had won in the late war, by individual gallantry and his marriage connection with Taylor. Davis had served lately in the House, but, resigning his seat to lead a Mississippi regiment, he came back as a Senator to fill a vacancy, under the temporary appointment of the Governor, and was confirmed by the legislature of his State. His cast of mind was rigid and strongly Southern ; cotton formed the staple of his political economy, and Calhoun was his ideal of a statesman. His heart was consecrated to expanding the area for slave States, and for that patriarchal system of labor as to whose eternal fitness he felt no doubt whatever. He was precocious in hardening into that tenacious, inflexible attachment to precepts, which in these waxen days of Northern sensibility won so many concessions for the sake of national harmony. As an instance of rigidity worthy a disciple of the South Carolinian, Davis had just declined a commission from the President, as brigadier-general of volunteers, on the ground that only a State could confer such a title ; and the first impression he made this winter in senatorial

debate was as a martinet who praised regular troops above volunteers as soldiers, in words that intimated quite offensively that "the lower grades of men" were the better kind for such as himself to handle.*

What, if he ever encountered him, this haughty scion of the Democracy thought of that gaunt, awkward, ill-dressed Whig of the other House, who was easy-humored and companionable, but shy of drawing-room receptions, we have no means of knowing. Had not Abraham Lincoln been pulled out of slave soil while his roots were tender he would have died unknown. But poverty in a free territory helped make a man of him. This Congress saw the first and last of him in legislative life, for he declined to run another term, and his district reverted to the Democrats. Singular and striking in personal appearance, as those who met him in these years observed,—not supposing that observation of much consequence,—a kind but shrewd sagacity and droll humor were his salient traits. Above all, he imaged to the mind a steadfast honesty of purpose, and genuineness. In a single year he was pronounced a universal favorite among men who could appreciate whatever was rare, racy, and unique, and take a rough diamond upon its own intrinsic worth. Bad taste blurred the dignity of his efforts as a debater during this brief national episode, as when one enters the fashionable circle in a homespun suit. He showed himself clear-headed, a master of resources, nor did he fear to measure himself against statesmen of renown; but the flavor of the stump and village grocery detracted from one who trained with the party of gentility. In one speech of this session he dissected the President's partisan statement of the causes of the Mexican War, and, after a favorite process of logical reasoning convicted Polk out of his own mouth. But in another he flung dignity to the winds, and in a sort of

* Alfriend's Life of Jefferson Davis; Cong. Globe, 1847-48 Davis, while in the House, had alluded in the same supercilious way to the "tailor and blacksmith," though intending no personal offence; and this called out Andrew Johnson in reply. Alfriend, ib.

colloquial harangue on Presidential candidates, he amused the House with humorous stories of hogs and oxen, and with bucolic illustrations, pointed and racy, but by no means elegant.* Lincoln's quaint originality, in short, impressed his fellow-members more than the fibre of his statesmanship, which was fair and cautious; and had he been returned to another Congress it is possible he might have suffered, on becoming better known, that popular hindrance to high honors which more than one able American has lamented in his own instance, by gaining the reputation of being comical. But Lincoln showed himself, even at this homelier stage of advancement, a logician of no mean power, whose conveyance of his ideas could be clear and picturesque, and as a political counsellor he was sage and practical.†

Others noticeable this session for the first time in the seats they occupied were John Bell, Stephen A. Douglas, Robert M. T. Hunter; John P. Hale, too, of New Hampshire, rosy-faced and jocular as were few public men in these times of his anti-slavery stripe. These all had served in the House, but were now elected to a Senate which held still, of the old magnates, Webster, Clayton, Calhoun, Berrien, Benton, Mangum, Crittenden, and John Davis; and among important accessions more recent, Dix, Cameron, Cass, Reverdy Johnson, and Corwin. Badger, President Harrison's brief Secretary of the Navy, was also here. In the House were John G. Palfrey, of Massachusetts, and John Minor Botts, that good Harry Clay Whig from Virginia who had figured so strongly when in Representatives' Hall before, at the time of President Tyler's apostasy.‡ Palfrey, who was a scholar and a Whig of free-soil tendencies, joined Giddings in voting against a Whig Speaker, and for this offence was read out of the party. From Maryland, came two able representatives of opposite polities, Alexander Evans, a Whig, and Robert McLane (the son of Andrew Jackson's

* See Cong. Globe, Appendix.

† J. G. Holland's Lincoln, c. 9. See also Hay & Nicolay.

‡ Vol. iv., p. 391.

famous Secretary), a Democrat. A re-elected member of the House was Andrew Johnson, the Tennessee tailor, a rare plebeian among slaveholders. Old party names were still dominant in this Congress. The Senate, which was ruled by the Democrats, ranked Hale as its only independent; in the House there were four of this latter style, all chosen in opposition to regular nominees of the administration party; and of these one Levin, a roving citizen who had located at Philadelphia, represented a novel and sporadic movement in Atlantic cities known as "Native American." *

Adverse tempest had overturned the goodly majority which sustained the President in the previous House. This winter by a fair computation the Representatives stood 118 to 110 against Polk's party. Robert C. Winthrop, a Massachusetts Whig, chosen Speaker by a margin much narrower,† made a dignified presiding officer, — courteous and anxious to do his whole duty, at the same time with a sense of high lineage which repelled the envious. Windy

¹⁸⁴⁷ December-
¹⁸⁴⁸ January. censure of the President and unprofitable inquiry upon the motives of the Mexican war, that red drama of iniquity, occupied this popular branch week after week to little purpose. Clay's Lexington speech supplied the Whigs with ammunition for the play of their ponderous artillery. Another document which served this prelude to a Presidential campaign was a long and elaborate statement of the official facts: this too had appeared in print shortly before Congress convened; Gallatin, that ancient survivor of the Jeffersonian period, penned it as a last appeal to his fellow-countrymen at the remarkable age of eighty-six. Resolutions jostled one another, obstructive and obnoxious to the Executive, which stood little chance of being answered; these served as the tenter-hooks of invective speeches for home consumption. One of these, to which we have already alluded, was that of Abraham Lincoln. As to the

* See 73 Niles, *passim*.

† *Supra* p. 76.

first shedding of blood by Mexicans upon "our soil," according to the President's message, "when," asked the member from Illinois "did that soil become ours?" and the drift of his few pertinent interrogatives was to throw upon Polk the difficult burden of establishing a title to the Nueces region through either Spain or France. For as a fact, so far as the United States were concerned, the title to that soil was at least clouded and disputable. Upon this thesis, in language quaint and homely, the orator made a clear, dispassionate and confident analysis of the evidence as the President had already submitted it. The first blood of the Mexican war was shed, as he showed conclusively, not upon "our soil" at all, but only upon what we claimed to be our soil, — a claim with no clear proof to support it.*

The President sent a message to Congress in the middle of December, explaining why he had withheld his approval from a bill which passed on the last day of the previous Congress for river and harbor improvements. Monroe's famous message of 1822 had confined the constitutional scruple to improvements which were purely internal; † but Polk, pursuing that stricter rule which Andrew Jackson initiated, enlarged the objection to improvements like the present. The House, in retort, passed a resolution affirming, by more than a two-thirds vote, that river and harbor improvements were just and constitutional. ‡

The House in January called upon the Executive to furnish whatever correspondence had been held with Santa Anna; and the Executive declined to comply. General Taylor's correspondence with the War Department was called for, likewise General Scott's; all this, of course, to show the grievances of those officers against the War Department. Meantime through all this opprobrious criticism, the government struggled to carry the measures which seemed indispensable, — a loan bill, which was re-

* Congressional Globe.

† Vol. iii. p. 254.

‡ 73 Niles; Globe,

ported in the House, and a bill for ten more regiments, in the Senate. The doughty Cass called up the latter bill on the 30th of December. Calhoun wished a resolution considered first, which he had submitted,* to the effect that Mexico ought not to be held as a subjugated province, nor incorporated into the United States on a footing of equality. The debate on these two subjects occupied the Senate in January. Crittenden offered an amendment to the new regiment bill preferring volunteers to regulars; but Jefferson Davis supported Cass against it and the amendment was defeated. Calhoun made an impressive speech on his resolution, to show that the Mexican race was unfit to mingle with the Anglo-American. Hale and Clayton made strong speeches against raising more forces for subjugation. Other opponents of the administration spun out debate as though to gain time were their object. Meanwhile in the House finance was uppermost. The bill over which this branch dallied proposed to borrow

February. eighteen and a half millions as a war loan.

Wilmot proposed to levy a direct tax until the war debt was paid off; this was voted down by about three to one. The money market outside grew stringent and feverish; and a call was raised for more Treasury notes. After passing votes of thanks to Taylor and Scott, and giving new members time to air their maiden speeches, the House went seriously to work. On the 17th of February a proposal to authorize the issue of new Treasury notes for present difficulties was voted down by a majority of one, Speaker Winthrop voting with other conservative Whigs against the supply of sinews for an "irresponsible national bank," and the House at length granted the loan and sent its bill to the Senate."†

This sort of opposition to the Mexican war was not after all so very terrible. Nor did it quite come up to the

* Holmes of South Carolina had (doubtless in concert with Calhoun) offered a similar resolution in the House.

† Congressional Globe.

sonorous programme of stopping supplies unless the Executive could make its justification clear. In truth the Whigs, like their distinguished leader, were trimmers from instinct, and placed prudent limitations to the contest they waged against slave extension and inhumanity. Proud of their national fellowship they permitted tacit differences to exist among them on the subject most dislocating of all. They took into their reckoning, as every national party must, the wind which blew from all quarters of the compass. Northern sentiment, therefore, they diluted so that the product should be national sentiment. The election of a Speaker had shown that even in the House opposition was not harmonious. And the Presidential campaign now approaching, a record of promise more than performance was in order. Clay came to Washington this winter in person to argue cases before the black gowns in the pillared basement, and confer with political friends. Many sharp-sighted Whigs, who saw in Buena Vista's hero the rising sun, were for as non-committal a platform as possible. "Throw the reins," they would say, "on the horse's neck and he will take us through in safety." And once again the Massachusetts Daniel, whose utterances had been so bold when far away from the capital, seemed to shrink as he entered the lion's den. He had his own chances to calculate, and, if one must be plain, he overcalculated them greatly. To originate was not his forte in political legislation. A resolve of the previous session, which forbade the annexation by war of any new territory whatsoever, was introduced, and known as Berrien's resolve, because Webster would not put his own idea into shape. And where was Webster now, with his breathlessly awaited speech to stop the war? The winter was far advanced before he came to Washington at all; and then he seemed most occupied in thumping the dust out of his briefs in the court room under the Senate chamber. One declaration did Ashmun, of Massachusetts, propose and carry in the House,—that this war had been "unnecessarily and unconstitutionally begun by the President of the United States." It was

the only substantial advantage which the House derived from its whole prolix controversy with the President.

To stop this war with Mexico was certainly impracticable. Bulletins from Vera Cruz soon made it tolerably clear that the conquest had already been completed ; that a treaty of peace was forthcoming which would add an immense domain to the spacious expanse of this republic. Opponents of the administration might fear such results, such an acquisition ; but "manifest destiny" marched on. Hence the propriety, and even necessity, of deferring party proclamations and policy until the situation had fully developed. December closed with rumors that Mexico had made propositions ; other rumors came in January that we were on the eve of peace ; and February dawned with an authentic report by pony express from New Orleans, that Mexico had at length offered to sign a treaty on substantially the terms which Trist proposed before the last struggle at the gates.* All these tidings, with the news besides of Santa Anna's expulsion from power, kept the Whig opposition paralyzed. Scarcely had our Represen-

Feb. 21. tatives passed the loan bill when the spurred messenger arrived at Washington to deliver to President Polk the long-desired treaty of peace.

To return for a brief space to our military narrative.† Santa Anna, when taking the field for the last time, had issued a decree appointing substitutes in order to provide for the contingency of his death or capture. He sent this document to the president of the Mexican supreme court, Manuel de la Peña, to be kept in reserve. On the 16th of September, just after his flight from the Capital, as our invading army entered it, the Mexican commander resigned the presidency *ad interim* and claimed other powers which Peña pronounced unconstitutional. Peña himself repaired promptly to Queretaro, — the Mexican Congress having previously authorized the supreme government to reside in any part of the

* *Supra*, p. 57.

† *Supra*, p. 61.

republic, should the exigencies of war require it — and on the 26th assumed, under the fundamental law of Mexico, the office of provisional president. A man of probity and public experience, President Peña accepted the inevitable calamity and addressed himself to the task, humiliating as he must have found it, of making the best possible and speediest terms with conquerors. The guerilla warfare which Santa Anna had been disposed to keep up was checked ; all pretensions on his part to dictate a successor were overruled ; and forced to surrender command of the fragmentary bands which felt his illusion no longer, and deposed with true Spanish vehemence, as a traitor and robber of the treasury, Santa Anna retired to private life, and soon after into voluntary exile. Later on chaos and collapse in this unhappy republic gave his strong vitality another trial ; for it really seemed as if Mexico could neither live with him nor without him.*

Scott, in the interval, flushed with his splendid victories, found himself involved in the task, to him more formidable, of ruling his impetuous temper. Trials not a little vexatious were in store for him. He had improved the season of the armistice which followed the fight of Cherubusco by making an unusual example of some captured deserters from his army, for the sake of military discipline ; fifty of whom were strung up, and the others branded, lashed, and imprisoned.† With the same stern sense of military supremacy he promulgated from his headquarters at the national palace, three days after entering the city of Mexico, an order which subjected the conquered inhabitants to the summary infliction of martial law, and in return for the military safeguard of the faith and honor of the American soldiery (to force which safeguard was death), he levied upon this Mexican capital a summary assessment of \$150,000. The war being virtually over, he gave his further attention to a system of finance which

* 8 H. H. Bancroft, c. 20; 73 Niles, 214.

† 8 Bancroft, p. 497; Mansfield, 280.

^{Sept.-Dec.} should stimulate overtures of peace as soon as possible. Vera Cruz, Puebla, and such other centres of the Mexican republic as could yield the juice of revenue were brought under pressure of the descending screws, while poverty's precincts were spared.* The ills of such an oppression, which emanated, it might be said, from Scott's own superior, President Polk, lasted only until Mexico was brought to her marrow-bones. Scott did not billet his troops upon the inhabitants, nor permit such wanton and intemperate pillage as prevailed at some remote points, — at Santa Fé, for example, where Colonel Sterling Price kept lax discipline, and his volunteers abandoned themselves to insult and outrage. While enforcing his stern orders, however, and striking terror into the Mexicans, our commander-in-chief became involved in bitter quarrels with the subordinate generals, of other polities, who had carried the flag from the seacoast under

^{1848.} him. Scott preferred charges at Washington ^{Jan. Feb.} against Worth, Pillow, and Lieutenant Colonel Duncan and ordered them under arrest. Their friends in court were at least as strong as his; and with an ironical parade of impartiality, the Secretary of War ordered accused and accuser to appear together before a court of inquiry; relieving the officers from arrest, and directing, at the same time, that the command in Mexico should be turned over to Major-General William O. Butler. Scott obeyed orders, realizing with a pang the true purport of the President's instructions; and the court of inquiry, adjourning from Mexico to Maryland, completed near home their tardy labors by finding this whole group of distinguished officers as void of offence as possible.†

* 2 Scott's Memoirs, cs. 33, 34. The "martial-law order," so styled, was first published at Tampico, February 19, 1847; it was afterwards reprinted at Vera Cruz and Puebla before the capital was taken. The proceeds realized by General Scott's internal levies in the Mexican public amounted to about \$220,000 Ib.

† 2 Scott's Memoirs c. 35. Scott found his solace in quoting for his own case the poet's couplet —

"True as the dial to the sun,
Although it be not shined upon."

Secretary Marcy's order which devolved the command upon General Butler reached Scott more than a fortnight after the difficult victory of diplomacy had been won. A treaty of peace had been signed under negotiations of which Scott fully approved. Unfortunately for Trist, when the Mexican people, after all their obduracy, came forward to accept the terms he had tendered in vain, he found his functions revoked by the President and his mission terminated. And the same distance of intercourse which had thrown military officers into doubt and uncertainty now threatened to break the opportunity of peace. Trist concluded to heed the spirit of his instructions without standing upon the strict letter. "The war can never end" was Buchanan's solicitous message, which the chief clerk sent through the lines on his arrival, "whilst Mexico refuses even to hear the proposals which we have always been ready to make for peace."* Upon this idea Trist acted, a recalled functionary,† and yet the only functionary on the spot; for Scott himself had no intention of taking on his own hands a business which the President had never trusted him with. A long treaty of twenty-three articles, in the English and Spanish tongues, was signed at Guadalupe Hidalgo, by Nicholas P. Trist for the United States, and three commissioners appointed by President Peña, on the part of Mexico, the same to be ratified by the Presidents respectively of the United States and Mexico, with the consent of a Senate on the one side and of a Congress on the other. An additional and secret article extended the time for exchanging ratifications. One article of this treaty marked the boundary line between the two republics,—by the Gulf of Mexico, the Rio Grande, and by the rivers Gila and Colorado and a line not yet surveyed to the south of New Mexico, conforming to a map annexed; Texas, in other words, as claimed by the United States, together with New Mexico and all its ter-

* Dispatch of April 15, 1847; 72 Niles, 326.

† Trist's order of recall was sent October 6, 1847.

ritorial additions and upper California. Another article gave free passage to all vessels of the United States by the Gulf of California and the river Colorado. The eighth article reserved to Mexicans already in the ceded territories the option to remain or remove, and promised to respect their full rights of property. Article eleventh further protected them against all savage incursions. By other articles the United States agreed, in consideration of this extensive cession of territory, to pay to Mexico fifteen million dollars, three millions of which amount were to be given in cash as soon as Mexico should ratify; also to assume and pay all the liquidated claims due to American citizens under former treaties and to discharge the Mexican republic from all other claims to date. The former treaty of amity and commerce was renewed for eight years. And finally the conqueror and conquered agreed that should any disagreement arise again between them, they would try to adjust it peaceably; but should war break out hereafter ("which is not to be expected, and which God forbid!") they would observe humane rules which were specified. No change was ever to be made in the boundaries agreed upon "except by the free consent of both nations lawfully given."*

A glory gilds the historical page for a moment. John Quincy Adams, at fourscore years, was a participant still in the debates of the House, though less actively than before, and rarely was he absent from his seat. As senior member he administered the oath to Speaker Winthrop,

1848. his colleague, when the House organized. The

President's January message, which refused information to the House concerning the objects of the war and the instructions given for procuring a peace, brought the old man on his feet with a speech to which the whole hall listened, delivered with his earlier fire, but January in a failing voice.† Adams in these days won

* 9 U. S. Statutes 922

† "This is a novel message," began Adams impetuously. "It denies for the first time in our history the constitutional power of the House to call for this information." See 73 Niles, 321.

the respect of all parties and all sections by his consummate sturdiness of character. A reception which he gave that same month, where Clay was present, brought a more eager throng for salutations than at the White House. Never since the ex-President entered the House had the political tone of his native State been so nearly in accord with his own. Punctually on the 21st of February did Adams take his seat, as well to all appearance ^{February 21-23.} as usual. Rumors of peace and of the treaty. which had just arrived stirred the air of the capitol. The House was occupied upon a batch of trivial resolutions; and about one o'clock the Speaker had risen to put a question to vote, when a sudden cry was heard, "Mr. Adams is dying!" The venerable statesman was falling over the left arm of his chair while his right arm reached out to grasp his desk for support. One member caught him in his arms, while others rushed from all parts of the hall to tender assistance. The House adjourned at once, and its dying member, helpless but hardly insensible, was borne upon a sofa into the rotunda, where he was quickly surrounded by members of both Houses, and strangers, the Senate by this time having also adjourned in great agitation. Upon medical advice the sofa was borne to the entrance door of the east portico, where the air was found too chilly, and then to the Speaker's room, whence the crowd was excluded. While lying here Adams partially recovered his speech and said in faltering accents: "This is the last of earth" — quickly adding the final words, "I am content." Through the day he lingered, all unconscious; through the next also, a national holiday, whose festivities pre-arranged were suspended in consequence; and in the early eve of the 23d, still in the Speaker's room, and close by the familiar post of duty, the great commoner breathed his last.*

It was a remarkable death, worthy of a remarkable man, and quite resembling that of America's friend in revolutionary times, the Earl of Chatham. Adams's example

* Newspapers of the day; 73 Niles.

thrilled his fellow-countrymen at last as though a final tableau of the heroic age had been taken with him. It was false to imagine that slaveholders honored most deeply in their hearts Northerners who were the most pliable to their wishes. Bitter, taunting, exasperating as this spokesman of a pilgrim constituency had so often been, they vied with orators of Adams's own section and vicinity in commemorating the varied talents, the vast learning and experience, the accumulated public honors, the spotless private character and religious faith, and above all, the admirable courage and consistency which marked this career of more than fifty years, whose conspicuous merit was to make the humbler post of fame shine brighter than the highest.

The obsequies of the "patriot father and the patriot sage" * took place at the capitol on the 26th, and his seat in the House was ordered to be draped and unoccupied for thirty days. A confidential message from the President transmitting the treaty of peace with Mexico had reached the Senate doors almost at the instant that Adams was brought dying into the rotunda, when the Senate so hastily

^{Feb. 21-} adjourned. This was on Tuesday; and no sooner ^{March 10.} did the Senate convene again after so strange an augury than the message came a second time. The doors of executive session were closed upon deliberation, and the Executive preserved its habitual secrecy; but the existence and the contents even of the momentous document were soon diffused through the press. For more than a fortnight did the Senate deliberate; the President's organ advocating the treaty in the meantime and urging its prompt adoption, but slightly modified. The Senate took this course, and removed the injunction of secrecy. That article was amended which gave to Mexicans the right to become citizens of the United States. An article was expunged which related to land grants. A slight change was made concerning terms of payment. The secret

* A title bestowed in the House eulogy of Holmes of South Carolina.

article which extended the time for ratification was suppressed. No change, however, was made either in the boundaries of the new cession or the consideration to be paid. Thus altered, the treaty which Trist had made was ratified on the 10th of March by more than a two-thirds vote.* Anxious to complete the business before the Peña government could be overthrown, Polk waived all objections of informality and sent the amended treaty on its swift return to Mexico. Ambrose H. Sevier, of the Senate, and Nathan Clifford, the Attorney General, took the document, as commissioners on the part of the United States. The Mexican Congress this time adhered to its purpose; ratifications were exchanged at Queretaro on the last of May; and on the 4th of July our President proclaimed the welcome peace. With New Mexico and Upper California annexed, and Texas stretched to its most ample limits, we had an empire for a republic, a new acquisition of territory second only to that of 1803. Besides arching the Gulf of Mexico with greater space, we could now command the growing commerce of the Pacific, stretching towards China from the wide embrace of San Diego, Monterey, and the Golden Gate.†

Clifford remained in Mexico our minister plenipotentiary, while Isaac Toucey of Connecticut filled his vacant place in the administration as Attorney-General.‡ During the four months or more of anxious suspense which preceded this fortunate conclusion Congress had been in a dilatory mood, watching the national party conventions and speculating on the turn of events. Cass, by dint of steady effort, pressed his "ten regiment" bill through the Senate in spite of Calhoun's resistance, and this was the end of that measure. A loan for \$16,000,000 gained the full sanction of a

May 30.

July 4.

March.

* By 38 to 15. *Congressional Globe.*

† 74 Niles, 41, etc.; President's message, July 6, 1848; 8 H. H. Bancroft, 542.

‡ Trist, who was now coldly ignored by his government, wrote, in August, a very caustic letter to the Speaker of the House in denunciation of the Executive. Leave to print this letter was refused.

law that same month; * and, aided by auspicious peace, Secretary Walker borrowed the money to good advantage.

July 6. Impelled finally by the President's message of July 6, our sluggish legislators prepared to conform to the new condition. By this time were heard the fife and drum of the returning volunteers, and the last of our guards at the Mexican capital were relieved by native soldiery on the 12th of June. Mexican colors replaced the stars and stripes on the national palace; Vera Cruz with its custom-house and fortress were restored. The cost of this bloody war it was yet much too early to count; indeed, the loss to the vanquished republic in money alone has never since been footed; while that to the United States has been estimated in later times at upwards of \$166,000,000.† Polk had figures at hand for immediate exigencies. Our public debt had already grown by \$48,000,000 since he entered office, amounting now to nearly \$66,000,000, in addition to which \$12,000,000 out of the \$15,000,000 stipulated in the treaty as a purchase price would have to be met by instalments, besides some trifling millions for the spoliation claims of our citizens which we henceforth assumed. "Without changing our tariff," observed the President, encouragingly, "we shall easily carry our whole public debt." Punctual faith in financial obligations was the settled maxim of this nation ever since Hamilton first inculcated it, and Congress appropriated accordingly with very little hesitation.‡

But the dreaded difficulty was behind: How should this vast territorial area be peaceably divided, with slavery reaching for the prize on one side and freedom on the other? Polk, with the mock mantle of Washington upon his shoulders, invoked the spirit of conciliation in disposing of this question; he proposed to divide the prize. For in "our glorious Union," of incalculable value, no

* Act March 31, 1848, c. 26.

† 8 H. H. Bancroft, 543-545.

‡ See President's message, July 6, 1848; 74 Niles, 41; Act July 29, 1848.

geographical dissension should be indulged.* This meant, in fact, that the Missouri Compromise line should be drawn onward to the Pacific Ocean; nor did this administration appear to be without hope that a proposition, on its face so liberal to men who were indifferent to the moral aspect, would find acceptance at once.† It was not a new idea, nor newly expressed. Buchanan, Northern trimmer that he was, had proclaimed months earlier, in one of those private letters which are sure to reach the press, that while concession from his section would do slavery no practical good, concession would be necessary to save the Union.‡

Polk's full designs upon Mexico were never probably committed to paper. Scarcely had he taken his oath of office before he announced to one at least of his cabinet that he meant to acquire California.§ Yet Dix, of his party, when offered early the mission to London (which he afterwards declined), was asked by Polk in person to tell Silas Wright that he had no schemes of conquest regarding Mexico.|| This President was not alike to all men, and he could dissimulate. Slidell, certainly, and others in his special confidence, meant that California besides Texas should be acquired; and whether prophets or instigators, they saw the acquisition take effect.¶ Calhoun we have seen this winter hostile to the idea of annexing Mexico to this Union, with her foreign and hybrid population and manners; and this was because he feared, as did many others at that moment, that a scheme for lashing that republic bodily to the

* President's message, July 6, 1848.

† See Buchanan's letter in 2 Tyler's *Tylers*, 461. Also, p. 47, *supra*.

‡ Letter, August 25, 1847; 73 Niles. The writer here favors distinctly the extension of the Missouri Compromise line.

§ See vol. iv., p. 498.

|| 1 Memoirs John A. Dix, 202 (July 10, 1846).

¶ See 1 Curtis's Buchanan, 600-606. And see letter of Pickens to Buchanan, ib., July 5, 1846, pressing that point. "Some people," he adds, "seem to have very tender consciences of late as to conquests. I should like to know if half the earth is not now owned by the rights of conquests."

Union from stem to stern, had gained favor at the White House.* Calhoun's plan, while the war lasted, was to keep the territory we wanted — Texas, California, and New Mexico — by drawing a military line in front of it, letting other invasion alone.† But there were ardent Southerners who wished all Mexico annexed or subjugated.

Polk's pious plan of sharing the new territory between slavery and freedom did not pacify a divided Congress.

^{July 4.} On the nation's anniversary, scarcely two suns before this message was read, had been laid on a tract of land between the executive buildings and the Potomac, the corner-stone of a national obelisk of colossal design, dedicated to Washington. The weather was bright, and listeners applauded. Winthrop, the Whig Speaker, delivered the felicitous address of this occasion, whose beautiful peroration adjured the maintenance of the Union as Washington's fittest monument. Quitman, fresh from his Mexican laurels, marshalled the imposing procession. But blocks of white marble could not bury a sectional strife which peace with Mexico precipitated. News crossed the ocean of riots in Paris, an abdicated king, and "four days of blood" for a free republic and rights of man.

There had been excitements, even in this placid city which bore Washington's name; forebodings of the intestine strife which this immense national acquisition brought with it. Mount Vernon's vicinity and the slipshod town of Alexandria had ere this been ceded back to Virginia, and the original ten-mile square of the Federal district reduced to that Maryland half which lay north of the Potomac, embracing Washington and Georgetown. What remained was equally slave soil with

^{April.} that relinquished. Some seventy slaves owned in Georgetown tried to make their exodus in a

* General Quitman was one of those who advised the President to occupy Mexico fully, with a view to annexing the whole republic

2 Claiborne's Life of Quitman, c. 14.

† Calhoun's Speeches, 1847-1848.

schooner bound from Washington to Philadelphia. A head wind compelled the captain to cast anchor near the mouth of the Potomac, where the vessel was overtaken by a swift steamboat despatched in pursuit, and the trembling fugitives were brought back and cooped in the Washington jail, pending their transfer through brokers, to be sent farther south. The callow residents of the District were in great commotion. A mob gathered about the printing-office of the *National Era*, an abolition sheet, broke the glass windows, and threatened serious mischief, which the police barely prevented. When John P. Hale introduced in the Senate a bill for the better protection of property against rioters, senators from the slaveholding States denounced him rudely, even Calhoun in a moment of excitement calling him "a maniac." It was here that Foote, of Mississippi, a dapper little senator of red-hot convictions, whose eloquence, equally red-hot, had first brought him into notice in a speech which spouted a long Latin passage and misquoted Byron, gained the unpleasant nickname of "Hangman Foote." He gave Hale plainly to understand, in course of the debate, that should the latter ever visit Mississippi the orator would be happy to assist in elevating him to the nearest tree. Not less angry was the longer altercation of words in the House, where Palfrey resented an indignity offered to Giddings by the Washington mob, by raising the inquiry whether new laws were needful in this District to protect members of Congress from violence. Such was a Washington episode of these times during passion week.*

By the time peace brought her territorial trophies, the Wilmot Proviso was deeply offensive to Southern minds. Not one iota was Southern ambition disposed to recede; the rights accorded to slavery where it had been already planted were not enough. The rallying cry at the North — "no more slave territory, but all new territories for freedom" — was philanthropic and

July.

* Congressional Globe; newspapers of the day.

in just accord with the Constitution and its interpretation by the parties of both sections. But this cry dismayed the South and drew them more strongly together, Whigs and Democrats. They had grown to associate the Union with compromise on moral as well as economic questions. They had been accustomed to demand imperiously when the crisis came, and then to make a magnanimous show of yielding some advantage for the sake of harmony. Fighting qualities were not what they looked for in the prosperous and money-seeking North. Nor, on their own part, fond as so many were of the Union and passionately attached to a sentiment, were Southerners ready to sacrifice their system for it. Slavery and the South were, by this era, believed inseparable. Loyalty to their institution and to one another had become of more consequence to their minds than loyalty to the Union. A new race of slaveholders had grown up,—dictatorial, impatient of modern philanthropy and modern agitation, poisoned with preferences for State pride, revolutionists against the world's opinion. Southern statesmen of the younger and bolder type, gentlemen on whom Calhoun's genius had impressed its image, were not to be satisfied with the external tolerance of slavery as confined to its present limits; for the star of destiny guided them onward. Slavery on this continent, as they regarded it, was to be an active, a growing, even a moral and educating force, to the confusion of European theories and the nineteenth century. Tyler, the ex-President who had done so much to promote the ends of this younger school, stated with triumphant confidence the great plantation interest which predominated in his section, giving confidence in its ultimate ends. "The monopoly of the cotton plant was the great and important concern. That monopoly now secured, places all other nations at our feet."*

The glory of the Mexican War was the glory of the South, like the Texan conquest before it. That section

* 2 Tyler's Tylers, 483 (April, 1850).

feared, and not without reason, the danger of anti-slavery agitation to their system. To add largely to the area of slavery by annexations from Mexico was regarded by slaveholders as a necessary means of strengthening their power against Northern encroachments ; which, as a candid writer has stated, was the more hazardous mode of meeting anti-slavery agitation because it placed the South in the position of seeking such preponderance while the North was not seeking preponderance at all.* It was the exposure of that ambition to preponderate which startled the North to its assertion of the Wilmot Proviso and gave the moral agitation a force which Garrisonians could never have inspired. But now that the vast Mexican spoliation was ours, the first stumbling-block to slavery consisted in the fact that this comprehensive territory came into our possession free territory. The Louisiana purchase, under far different circumstances, brought soil into the Union polluted already by French and Spanish slave codes ; and hence the logical necessity, since we failed to expel the curse, of admitting new slave States in turn, contaminated with the disease which had spread from centres like New Orleans and St. Louis. But native decrees of Mexico had long since dedicated our present conquest to freedom, and this whole vast acreage, but thinly inhabited, came into the wardship of the conquering republic, virgin soil, chaste and unpolluted.

Calhoun perceived the disadvantage his section was under in this last respect ; and before the transfer of territory had been effected at all, he spun his cobweb in a series of resolutions which artfully proclaimed this acquisition the property of the several States in common, and that slavery spread into the new soil at once by force of the Constitution, there to remain unless dislodged by positive law. The bold hypothesis was brushed aside by Webster, the only debater now in the Senate who was fit to cope with him ; and the combat of their mighty

* See 1 Curtis's James Buchanan, 580

intellects on abstractions like this afforded one of the intellectual treats of the present Congress, particularly towards its close.* Webster was thought to have had the better of his keen antagonist; but Calhoun gained the effect that to him was of most consequence,—to inculcate the Southern mind.

Surely there was little hope that Congress, in these hot midsummer months, when impatient to disperse and take part at home in the Presidential canvass, would dispose of these territorial perplexities off-hand and without giving popular expression an opportunity on such a subject. The President's recommendations were unheeded. But our Whig House went boldly forward to hurl a harmless thunderbolt. The time had fully come, as both parties confessed, to organize Oregon as a territory. Some had hoped to arrange a bill out of this very necessity large enough to hold Oregon, California, and New Mexico together. That, however, was impossible.

^{August.} The House, on the 2d of August, passed a bill for organizing Oregon alone as a territory.† To this bill was tacked the Wilmot Proviso, by a section which extended the ordinance of 1787, or slavery prohibition, over the whole territory. In the Senate, upon the report of its committee on territories, explanatory words were added to this proviso, alleging as the reason that Oregon lay north of the Missouri Compromise line. This was the artifice of Douglas, now a senator from Illinois, and too far advanced in honors to think he could ever be distanced by humble Abraham Lincoln. The House

^{August} negatived that amendment by a decisive vote,
^{11-13.} and the Senate at a late hour receded and passed the bill with its own explanatory language stricken out.‡ President Polk did not sign his approval

* Congressional Globe.

† By 129 to 71.

‡ The Senate vote stood finally 29 to 25. Dix, Dickinson, Houston, Benton, and Douglas were among those who voted to recede. Congressional Globe. Houston's vote was unexpected; that of Dickinson nearly as much so.

to the bill without recording his reasons for doing so. A territorial government for Oregon, he stated, was imperatively needed, and the line of 36° 30' excluded slavery sufficiently, apart from the present proviso. He added his official regret that no bill had passed for organizing the Mexican acquisition, and with a quotation from Washington's farewell address, solemnly commended once more the extension of the Missouri Compromise line as the true and just plan of national subdivision.* The example for this sort of executive caveat had been set by President Tyler.

One notable effort had been made by the Senate to unite all the territories in one measure. Clayton, of Delaware, a fair-minded member, whose little State at this time was half inclined to emancipate, reported from a select committee a proposal to erect territorial governments in Oregon, New Mexico, and California. This bill steered round the Wilmot Proviso by offering a reference of the slavery status to the Supreme Court, Congress inhibiting nothing. The plan was approved by the Senate, with scarcely a discussion, extremists like Calhoun and Jefferson Davis voting for it.† But reflection condemned the shuffling expedient. The House laid the measure on the table, not one Whig representative from a free State indorsing it.‡ But this plan, known in later debates as the "Clayton Compromise," deserves the reader's recollection somewhat longer.§

This session ended on the 14th of August. Free Wisconsin in the course of it was admitted as a new State, by a final act approving what had been done in convention by the people of the territory.|| Of joint resolutions

* Ex. Docs.; 74 Niles; Act August 14, 1848, c. 177.

† It passed this branch July 27, by 33 to 22. Congressional Globe.

‡ The House vote stood, July 28, 112 to 97. Ib.; 74 Niles.

§ Calhoun was understood to say in the Senate, when this vote was taken, that if the Oregon bill passed with the Wilmot Proviso it was time for the South to arm herself and establish her independence. Newspapers of the day.

|| Act May 29, 1848, c. 50. See vol. iv p 543.

there were many passed, whose chief staple consisted in thanks, gold medals, and glory.*

Long before adjournment the national party conventions had been held and the rival national candidates placed before the people. The convention of the Democracy and administration met first in the city of Balti-

more. Two rival delegations from the Empire State brought hither the clash of ideas which patronage and the Mexican War had fostered,—the “hunkers,” whose chieftains were Marcy and Dickinson, and the “barnburners,” or progressive Democrats of the Silas Wright school, among whom were John A. Dix, Preston King, Cambreling, and young Samuel J. Tilden, also the lively and versatile John Van Buren, son of the ex-President. The convention deciding to admit both sets of delegates equally, the “barnburners,” who were pledged to the Wilmot Proviso, withdrew under protest. The convention adopted the traditional two-thirds rule, and under it Lewis Cass of Michigan, who led the list from the start, was nominated for President on the fourth ballot; William O. Butler of Kentucky being next selected for Vice President. Cass was the statesman whom Lincoln’s inelegant satire in the House ridiculed as an ox which retreated while the farmer brandished his goad. No man from the free States truckled more contemptibly to the slave power in those days. At first, as any plain man from the far North, he had favored the Wilmot Proviso; next, like the meek and heavy brute which heeded its master’s flourish, he had backed to a doubtful position; but now he opposed the proviso altogether, and the farmer’s voice said, soothingly, “So! stand at that.”† In taking this last position Cass’s bid for the Presidency came up to Buchanan’s, and Buchanan, in truth, felt a little

* See Joint Resolutions, 9 U. S. Stats. at Large.

† See Lincoln’s speech, July 27, 1848; Congressional Globe, appendix. For Cass’s “Nicholson letter” of December 24, 1847, see 73 Niles, 293. This enunciated early the idea of popular sovereignty and Congressional non-intervention in the territories.

piqued that the later bidder should have taken the prize over him.* President Polk had, before the convention met, declined to be a candidate for re-election ; and, indeed, the South had by this time preferred to increase the scope of their plans by espousing Northern candidates of the manageable kind. Butler, the nominee for Vice-President, was the general to whom Scott had turned over his command in Mexico when relieved by the President's order. The convention took a negative stand on the question of slavery in the territories, neither approving the Wilmot Proviso on the one hand nor Calhoun's theory on the other. It was as safe to denounce abolitionists as to preach against royalty ; yet these resolutions were negative regarding the policy to be pursued on slavery extension.†

The next national convention was held by the Whigs at Philadelphia. Henry Clay's Lexington speech may not have meant an offer to take the helm once more ; but the warmth of its popular welcome stirred the flame of those ambitious embers which years and bitter disappointment had not wholly quenched. Unwise friends stimulated the thrice-defeated candidate with their prophecies of success. In New York most especially the current ran deep and strong to rectify the ill that State had done him on the previous trial. Clay, though chastened in spirit, was susceptible. Leaving Washington for a northward tour after a sober pause at the couch of the dying Adams, he advanced to accept the love-feasts prepared by his partisans. But the coffin of an ex-President, journeying in the same course toward its final resting-place, seemed to mock and reproach his worldly aspirations. All the day long in Philadelphia flags floated at half-mast in memory of the one, while streamers danced gayly to welcome the other. It taxed all the energy of Clay's New York committee to prevent the funeral escort which accompanied Adams's venerated remains homeward from

* See Buchanan's letter in 2 Tyler's Tylers, 461. John Tyler would have preferred Buchanan. He thought Cass a "Jerry Sneak." Ib 455.

† Newspapers of the day ; 74 Niles. Andrew Stevenson presided over this convention.

marching its black hearse through the streets on the very day fixed for the Kentuckian's public reception. The superstitious have recalled that Clay never entered that metropolis again to receive its homage, save in the same stiffened posture after the soul had fled. Nor were Clay's hopes of winning the Presidential race once more to be gratified.

Whigs who had loved and idolized the most were sick of being beaten with one perpetual candidate, and among these was Crittenden, who perilled a life-long friendship by refusing to aid Clay's new-born aspirations. "I prefer him to all men for the presidency," wrote this honorable statesman, "but my conviction, my involuntary conviction, is that he cannot be elected." * Many others might avow they had lost confidence in "royal Harry's luck;" faithful adherents who had grown gray in waiting for office under the banner of Whig principles. Then, too, there were other aspirants of long standing. General Scott had his friends. Webster was a competitor, hoping Clay would stand no longer in his light.

But Clay's real rival was the warrior whose fame had shot across the sky like a meteor. Zachary Taylor, so Crittenden thought and many sagacious Whigs with him, was the man raised up by Providence for the present crisis; he could be elected even if Clay could not.† Kentucky and other border States became gradually confirmed in that opinion. In New York, moreover, a Taylor movement gained headway; and Webster, who saw his own

^{January.} personal friends favoring this, warned them peevishly that if no other Whig candidates were kept prominent but these two, Clay would certainly be nominated.‡ Webster's cravings on his own behalf blinded him to the signs of the times.

The Whig convention met as we have stated. Webster, though vigorously supported by Massachusetts, stood fourth in every ballot,—even Winfield Scott leading him by an average of about three to one.

* 1 Coleman's Crittenden, 290.

† Ib 290, 301.

‡ 2 Curtis's Webster, 335.

The real competition, as preliminary moves had indicated, was between Clay and Taylor. Thurlow Weed, of New York, a skilful manipulator, worked for the candidate who could lead to victory, though his New York delegation had clung to Clay as their first choicee. It hurt the Kentuckian's chances that on the first ballot not only Ohio failed him, once so enthusiastic in his support, but the majority of his own State delegation.* Leading all others on the first ballot, Taylor on the fourth rose to 171, leaving Clay but thirty-two. The man "who never surrendered" gained thus the nomination. For Vice-President some Massachusetts man was desired. Webster had been approached earlier with his name in view, but his pride would not suffer him to take a second place. Abbott Lawrencee, a wealthy mill-owner, was proposed; but Taylor's anti-slavery foes protested that they would not have "King Cotton" at both ends of the ticket, and Millard Fillmore's name being sprung upon the convention by surprise, he was nominated with much good-will on the second ballot. Comptroller of New York this year, with a sound, sober record of Congressional experience as a background, his choice gave the only positive Whig impression to the convention. For, induced by the logic of popularity and doubtful of its own work, this body adjourned in great confusion, adopting no platform whatever, its delegates voting down resolution after resolution as soon as offered. But a great mass meeting in Philadelphia ratified in the evening the selection of Taylor and Fillmore; † and almost without knowing it, the Whigs had played their winning hand.

Northern Whigs unquestionably had assumed a great risk in tacking their faith to this slaveholding warrior, and the greatest risk of all in suppressing the vital

* The first ballot gave Taylor 111 votes, and Clay 97,—Ohio supporting Scott.

† Newspapers; 2 Curtis's Webster, c. 34; 2 Schurz's Clay, 305; 74 Niles; 1 Thurlow Weed's Life, c. 58. John M. Morehead, of North Carolina, presided over this convention.

principle of the Wilmot Proviso for the sake of harmonizing votes upon an available candidate. So dissatisfied were many of the Whigs who had taken advanced ground on that most momentous of all questions, freedom in the newly acquired territory, that they refrained from pledging their support to the hero of Buena Vista. Charles Allen and Henry Wilson, of Massachusetts, men of strong free-soil proclivities, left the convention in loathing, and washed their hands of the Whig party.* These and other bolting delegates, from Ohio and other free States, concerted for a third and Free-Soil convention to be held at Buffalo. That convention, which was held in August, brought into temporary alliance with dissatisfied Whigs, the seceding "barnburners" from the Democratic convention and radicals of the old

^{June-July.} "Liberty Party." Samuel Hoar, Charles Sumner, and Charles Francis Adams bore prominent parts in a local convention held at Worcester, which flung into the teeth of both Cass and Taylor that "Massachusetts wears no chains, and spurns all bribes."† "Conscience Whigs," as they were styled, gave the hue to this demonstration. But the "Liberty Party," with its cannon for use which had recoiled so badly in 1844, had, months in advance of the great party conventions,‡ put forward John P. Hale for President. This faction coalesced with the more spontaneous elements of dissatisfaction whose common bond was the Wilmot Proviso. And finally the "barnburners" of the New York Democracy met at Utica, and, framing a platform in appropriate terms, resolved to be represented at Buffalo.

Martin Van Buren, whose cunning hand rounded out this enterprise, had his revenge to take upon Cass for the latter's course towards him in 1844.§ This, if we may interpret his course in the light of political events to follow, was a motive stronger with him than any free-soil

* See Wilson's letter to New York Tribune, April 1, 1848.

† 74 Niles.

‡ In October, 1847.

§ See vol. iv. p. 467.

convictions. Old Kinderhook was just now very popular in his retirement. The Utica convention nominated him for President, an honor which he graciously recognized, while pointing them onward to Buffalo; and when that convention followed, Van Buren was the irresistible favorite. It was a convention in the shape of a fervid mass-meeting, untrammeled by strict rules or credentials, and breathing its first fresh air in a park, though adjourning to a church on the second day. Questions were put and carried by acclamation, amid tumultuous shouts. Charles Francis Adams of Massachusetts, the third in descent of the most kingly of our northern families, was led to the chair by an anti-slavery Democrat from Ohio, Salmon P. Chase. The resolutions adopted were bold and explicit; pledging this convention to "the national platform of freedom as opposed to the sectional platform of slavery," to "the proviso of Jefferson as the territorial policy which never should have been departed from." Non-interference with slavery was announced in the States where it already existed, but the spread of that evil was to be stopped; there should be no more slave States created, no more compromises made with slavery. It was a noble and inspiring platform, but the choice of a standard-bearer did not somehow come up to it. Clever management gave the chief honor to Martin Van Buren, who with great unanimity was named for President, with Charles Francis Adams for Vice-President.* This convention earned its reward; the Democratic seceders gained great strength in their pivotal State for the present contest; but the principles of eternal right drew very little inspiration in the canvass from the foxy machinator to whom the Free-Soil cause was committed.

The third-party movement was spent, though well spent, within the State to which Van Buren belonged. And as Free Soilers had once helped pull the Democratic chestnuts out of the fire, so now they were used to confer

* Newspapers of the day; 2 Schurz's Clay, 311.

upon the Whigs a similar benefit. The Buffalo movement in the end redounded to the Whig candidate in preference to Cass and the administration Democracy. For if the Whigs had framed no platform for a territorial policy, the Democrats had done scarcely better. Taylor, too, though a slaveholder, was an honest, wholesome man, but Cass trained with Northern doughfaces. This was not a mere campaign of hurrahs for "old Rough and Ready," the hero of Mexican battle-fields. Though taken on trust, with no platform but the candidate, Taylor was one to be trusted. Sterling patriotism, courage, sincerity of heart, good judgment, homespun plainness, were all in his favor. Common sense and simple directness may prove a better policy for civil troubles than that pride of statesmanship which twists in all directions and tangles as it twists. And thus did Taylor's strength grow as the canvass advanced.

The old warrior had no predilections for the Presidency. When first informed, at the Rio Grande, that he was likely to be nominated to the highest civil office he thought the proposition too absurd for a moment's consideration. But few American citizens, however modest, can be told repeatedly that the people seek to elevate them without yielding to the manifest desire. Once led to consider himself a candidate, Taylor, like any man of sense, was disinclined to be set aside. And this brought him into an unpleasant rivalry with Clay, whom he had so idolized in other years, and who, if the truth were told, viewed the defection of his fellow-Whigs, and of Crittenden in particular, with sensitive displeasure. Clay cooled towards his friend and neighbor in consequence, and was not fully reconciled while Taylor lived. To him Taylor's candidacy seemed presumptuous, and what most deeply offended him was the hero's blunt response to a feeler thrown out before the Whig convention met. This gave Clay to understand that he did not intend to withdraw, even though the latter were nominated at Philadelphia.*

* This announcement which Taylor made both by public and private letter, was published early in May See 2 Schurz's Clay, 298.

For having been named already by primary assemblies in various States, Taylor considered himself already "in the hands of the people." This frank challenge to the politicians, of which the Whigs were well aware when they met in convention, gave the finishing stroke to Clay's final aspirations. "Clay never should have entered the race," wrote Taylor in justification; "he was sure to be beaten."*

The Taylor movement, before the Whigs adopted it, was spontaneous and somewhat independent of polities. But once fully launched upon the canvass, this candidate strengthened the party cause, and yet made political managers anxious. The soldier nominee was now at his home in Louisiana. Letters came to him from all quarters of the Union, to proffer support or elicit his views on public questions. Some of these letters were artfully prepared by political enemies, who published in the press replies that he had intended should be private. In one epistle he "thankfully accepted" the nomination of some independent Democrats of South Carolina, who had preferred him to Cass because he would deal with slavery as a Southern man. Hereupon some Whig malcontents of New York State, tried to organize a party schism, with Clay their favorite at the head; but Clay, who had withdrawn from the race in earnest, forbade the use of his name. Other letters from Taylor embarrassed party friends, who had not forgotten the blunders of the previous Presidential campaign. Apprising Taylor of the use deceitful opponents were making of his letters, they suggested a final one such as they had drawn up to close all correspondence. Taylor took the advice in good part, and a last "rough and ready letter" soon appeared in a Baton Rouge paper, which was widely copied and created a good impression. In this the candidate defined his position consistently, as holding to Whig opinions, and added, besides, that if elected he would be no partisan, that he would not lay

August.
September.

* 1 Coleman's Crittenden, 315 (July, 1848).

violent hands on offices nor veto bills of Congress to suit himself.*

Clay felt his mortification deeply, and the desertion of his own Kentucky friends. But restrained now by the discipline of years, sorrow and repeated disappointments, his spirit sought solace in dignified silence. He refused to aid General Taylor's candidacy, but equally so to do it any injury. Crittenden carried Kentucky in the State election, and was chosen governor under the Taylor banner.†

This chief founder of the Whig party was not the only great civilian who felt himself wounded in the house of his friends. With less reason, because less truly the candidate who might have been, Daniel Webster sulked like an Achilles. Ashmun and Winthrop among his friends had subdued their preferences. Not until September, and long after the Buffalo convention had met, would he declare his support of any candidate; embarrassing Massachusetts Whigs who had sustained him honorably. Free Soilers at Worcester thanked him for refusing his aid to a slaveholder; and Webster still kept silence. But

Sept. 1. at last he addressed his fellow-Whigs of Marshfield in a speech which announced Taylor as a preferable choice to Cass; but sowed distrustful innuendoes, summing up Taylor's nomination as one "not fit to be made." "The sagacious, far-seeing doctrine of availability," Webster added with sardonic bitterness, "lay at the root of the whole matter."‡

That insult, that Taylor's nomination was "not fit to be

* Thurlow Weed claims that he and Millard Fillmore drafted this letter, the suggestion to send it being his own. (1 Weed's Life, c. 58.) But 1 Coleman's Crittenden, 294, claims the authorship of it for Crittenden, Toombs, and Alexander H. Stephens, all of whom were earnest advocates for Taylor's election, and saw the dangerous drift of his correspondence.

This "last letter" of Taylor's was addressed to one Captain Allison, and was dated September 4, 1848. See 74 Niles, 200.

† 2 Schurz's Clay, 307.

‡ 2 Curtis's Webster, c. 34; newspapers.

made," Webster repeated at a Whig banquet, and Abbott Lawrence answered him like a man.* But surely this slurring phrase accorded little with what Webster had written to Crittenden some eighteen months before. He spoke then of Taylor as "a most remarkable person;" as one "who has shown himself not only superior to his enemies, but far abler and wiser than his superiors at home." †

In all of Webster's passionate strivings for the Presidency in these later days, there was a blind delusion concerning his strength as a national candidate. New England was devoted to him, and among merchants and substantial men in Northern centres he had a considerable following. But the West and the South were not with him, except in admiration of his intellect. Federal antecedents were against him in those sections, and a feeling, besides, that he was selfish. Never in a national convention of his party did he approach the honor which he strongly yearned for. There was one avenue and only one by which he might have reached the Presidency; and that was to accept the second station and trust to the chances of nature. In his pride, without being aware of it, he flung away that prize this very year by refusing to stand on the Whig ticket as Vice-President. Webster's genius belonged to the Senate and the Cabinet; for his scope was rather to defend eloquently than to originate. His ambition for the Presidency was imbued with little positive scope of purpose beyond holding the great jarring spheres of our national system in obedience to the law of gravity. Loyal he unquestionably was, and he made of loyalty a virtue. He had risen to his loftiest stature as a statesman when, in those earlier years of Jackson's administration, he attacked secession behind the broad shield of the Constitution, and met the nullifiers with uncompromising front. But national reputation awakened in him the appetite for supreme office, and that appetite weakened his whole nature. It had been thus through the whole strange experience of Tyler's administration. It

* Harvey's Reminiscences, 172

† 1 Coleman's Crittenden, 281.

had been so since ; for through the whole iniquitous war with Mexico he had hung upon the wheels of the opposing administration rather than resist it in the Senate face to face. Where was his leadership felt in this long session of a new Congress ? Silent when opposition to the war had been promised ; silent over the death of John Quincy Adams, a son of Massachusetts whose fame should have inspired him ; opening his mouth to speak for the first time after Trist's treaty had been provisionally ratified, to oppose an army bill which the Senate had already passed and a cession of Mexican territory which was no longer hypothetical. Cass and Taylor had been nominated, the Free Soilers had assembled for a third convention, when Webster shook his mane like a lion, and spoke as became a statesman and as he had pledged himself to speak. The Oregon bill was then before the Senate. "I shall oppose all slavery extension and all increase of slave representation," he solemnly declared, "in all places, at all times, under all circumstances, even against all inducements, against all supposed limitation of great interests, against all combinations, against all compromise." * This strong passage, which Webster pronounced in his most earnest and effective manner, was a challenge to Taylor (so Webster's friends have considered) that he must stand on good anti-slavery ground if he wished Webster to support him.†

Other party Whigs who had hesitated or shown their discontent from one cause or another fell into line as the omens pointed to victory. Horace Greeley with his *New York Tribune* clung long to the hope of an independent demonstration which would drive Taylor out of the can-

* See *New York Tribune*, telegraphic report. In 5 Webster's Works, 302 (as revised in 1851), appears a speech of August 12, which expresses this sentiment in language less broad and impressive. But the context shows (ib. p 312) that the published speech was not that (August 10) which contained the original passage we have quoted.

† 2 Curtis's Webster, 344. Webster was peevish, morose, and despondent this summer. Ib. 342.

vass. Van Buren repelled this honest editor, nor would he like Henry Wilson join the revolt of Free Soilers. Though galled by other Whig presses, the *Tribune* remained spell-bound by Harry Clay until the latter peremptorily refused to have his name used longer for mischievous ends. The Clay dissenters finally called a public meeting in New York City at the Vauxhall Garden; and a large crowd attended it. John Minor Botts, of Virginia, who was one of the speakers, with a wry face, and appropriate words and gestures to denote that he was swallowing a bitter pill, announced that he had decided to vote for Zachary Taylor. There was great excitement and uproar, for this turn to the meeting was quite unexpected; but Greeley followed him with a calmer speech of like import, and three days later the names of the regular Whig nominees appeared for the first time at the head of the *Tribune's* editorial page, there to remain during the rest of the canvass. Seward was another Whig leader of this same fateful State, who, though no devotee of Clay, kept his decision in reserve until after the Buffalo convention. Distrustful of Van Buren's mission to fulfil what Northern Whigs had promised, he announced in August his hearty support of Taylor and Fillmore, and made many speeches during the next month for directing the canvass to those deeper moral issues which the Whig convention had timidly ignored. "I can easily know whom I ought to avoid," he would say, in allusion to Cicero's uncertainty, "but not whom I ought to sustain." While conservative in action, Seward in moral apprehension was far in advance of his party; and speaking in Cleveland this autumn for the Whig candidates, he declared that "slavery must be abolished," that "freedom and slavery are two antagonistic elements of society in America."* At a Whig rally which was held during their visit to Boston, on the evening of the 22d of September, Seward and Abraham Lincoln occupied the platform together as the chief speakers.

* 32 Century Magazine, 531.

Seward's speech, thoughtful, impressive, and touching closer than old-line Whigs were apt to touch the delicate national topic, was what the audience came to hear; and yet Lincoln, who followed him, furnished food for enlivenment of a very different flavor. This breezy stump orator of the West, in an hour's speech, put the old-fashioned Whig doctrines in a droll but convincing way, poked fun at the Democracy and its candidates, and with rollicking stories, piquant though unrefined, set his hearers in a roar, and sat down cheered to the echo. Many local committees applied at Whig headquarters the next day to secure the services of this racy and captivating speaker, but it was announced that he had left already for his home in Illinois. This was the first and probably the only political visit to Boston of a man whose name in twenty years was to echo down the grooves of time. Salient though Lincoln's remarks, the local Whig presses appear to have had too much sobriety to publish them.*

"Honest old Zach," the Whig nominee, remained quietly upon his plantation in distant Louisiana. Cass, who had resigned his seat in the Senate as soon as the Democracy made him their nominee, remained at his home, equally remote, among the ramparts of the Great Lakes,—pledged by his letter of acceptance never to compete for the Presidency again. In several Northern

* Boston newspapers of the day. Seward's speech of this evening was quite fully reported. Except for one or two unimportant speeches delivered in the immediate suburbs of Boston a few evenings earlier, Lincoln does not appear to have made other addresses in New England on this tour, being mainly occupied at the West. On his way home he called at Albany upon Thurlow Weed, who took him to see Fillmore, the candidate for Vice-President, then sojourning in that city. T. Weed's *Autobiography*, 603, 32 *Century Magazine*. 531-536.

This writer is told that as Seward and Lincoln were alone together, soon after this Boston meeting, the latter, while contrasting the topics they had touched upon in their respective speeches, observed thoughtfully to this effect: "I believe you are right, and that this question of slavery extension is going to become the most important of all our public questions." Conversation with Hon. F. W. Seward, May, 1890.

States the Free Soil nominations at Buffalo were confirmed by political gatherings, and electoral tickets were made up accordingly. The State elections, beginning with August, were eagerly scanned for what they indicated as to National results in November. All signs portended a Whig victory as the Whig ranks closed up. Ohio and Pennsylvania gave to the Whigs ^{October.} much encouragement in the October elections. New York, the pivot State of the Union, chose local and national officers as usual upon the same ^{November.} day. Hamilton Fish, a Whig, devoted and honorable, was chosen Governor of the State over Chancellor Walworth, the nominee of administration Democrats, and John A. Dix, of the Free Soilers, both high-toned opponents. Dix, by his present candidacy, which was at the request of Van Buren, did something to atone for his earlier error as a Senator in giving the needful vote by which Texas, with her catalogue of ills, came into the Union. But this independence cost him a new sacrifice; Southern Democrats never forgave him for opposing the regular ticket in his State, and his political exile soon followed.* As for national results, the little magician's last game scored what he had most intended. Cass, who had mortified him in 1844, Van Buren mortified in return. The Free Soilers, too weak, of course, under present circumstances, to carry the electoral vote of a single State, decided the whole contest by what they accomplished in Van Buren's State. His numerical total at the polls was greater here than that of Cass, and the Empire State gave a splendid majority for the Whig electors of Taylor and Fillmore. In Massachusetts and in Ver-^{November.} mont besides, the popular vote for the Free Soil candidate outnumbered that given to the Cass ticket; the Whigs gaining the plurality, however, and the Presidential electors. Cass's "Nicholson letter" against the Wilmot Proviso, detested by all men of Northern conscience, was the death-warrant of his hope. His own State and,

* John A. Dix's Memoirs, 239.

in general, the Northwest had sectional pride enough to stand by him; but the people of the Middle States and New England turned their backs. The electoral votes from this Atlantic slope and more than a majority from the South besides brought in the Whig ticket triumphant; New York's vote turning the scale somewhat as before.* Fellow-feeling and the love of military glory carried Southern men confidently to Taylor; and yet Free Soilers, we shall see, had no cause to regret that they too had contributed to his victory. The "people's nominee" prevailed in this fight because he was loved and trusted of the people. North and South left the arbitrament of delicate issues growing out of the war to a brave and patriotic general, who had approved himself a man of sense, integrity, and sound judgment, rather than to any statesman of shifting and accommodating opinions who could not face an enemy. Military similitudes and military comparisons were irresistible at this moment. To the victorious Whigs it seemed as if another Washington had arisen. "The fourth of March," presaged the *National Intelligencer*, exultingly, "will revive the heroic age of the Republic." †

In no happy frame of mind, assuredly, could President Polk have prepared for the re-assembling of Congress on the 4th of December. Convincing against his December 4. will, one is still of his own opinion. The annual message of this session — the longest one, thus far in our history, to which a President had ever placed his signature — made laborious effort to defend the policy of this administration against the verdict of the people. Polk's

* See Table of Electoral Votes, appendix. The Massachusetts popular vote being so divided among the three candidates that no one had a majority, the Whig Governor convened the legislature, November 23, 24, in special session (as the Massachusetts statute required), by which process Whig electors were chosen. Under the present act of Congress, the whole Union voted for President on a uniform day, which this year was November 7th. As Ohio went for Cass, Pennsylvania's vote was essential.

† See 74 Niles, December, 1848.

language, like his looks, reminded one still of the circuit preacher. "Blood on his hands and Scripture on his lips," was the bitter comment of one political opponent who heard this message read. Collamer, of the Senate, with genial anecdote, recalled more pleasantly the Vermont rural lawyer, who, when reprimanded by the court for re-arguing a point which had just been decided against him, replied that he was not re-arguing, but was damning the decision.*

Freedom was preached in this message, the blessed right of self-government, hostility to monopoly and class privileges; and yet in the same breath came the counsel that millions of our free acres should be thrown open to the greatest of class monopolies, that antipodes of freedom to mankind. Polk distinctly admitted, what he should have foreseen, that this new acquisition from Mexico forced a domestic controversy which would threaten seriously the permanence and harmony of our Federal system. Yet legislation, so the President argued, ought to recognize the right of citizens in the slaveholding States to carry their slaves with them into territories which the common blood and treasure of the Union had acquired. And hence Polk exhorted Congress to adopt the fraternal plan which he had proposed before,—that of extending the line of the Missouri Compromise, the parallel of $36^{\circ} 30'$, to the Pacific Ocean, so as to permit slavery to erect new States south of that parallel but not north of it.†

It was not unnatural that Southern fellow citizens, no longer compunctious on the question of making cattle of human beings, who wished their slave area extended, should think an adjustment like this sufficiently fair and self-sacrificing on their part. The South had fought to gain Texas and Mexico; they thought the South moderate in proposing such a parallel. But to the more impetuous and daring of that section, even this was not

* 1 Coleman's Crittenden, 328.

† President's Message, Dec. 5, 1848.

satisfactory. The Wilmot Proviso would have put the caveat upon slavery over the whole acquisition. These men met that caveat with the assertion that slavery had the right to go into new territories wherever it would, and meet freedom there on terms of equal rivalry. Calhoun, watchful of the late canvass, had sounded the alarm

August. to his section over the Free Soil Convention in Buffalo. Objecting personally to both Cass and Taylor, as candidates, he predicted that the defeated party of this contest would amalgamate with the Free Soilers and bring in their candidate another time. When that time came South Carolina would again proclaim nullification, and slaveholders ought now to prepare for a struggle with the North.* Following the tenor **December.** of his advice, the members from slaveholding States, when Congress came together, met him to consider secretly what course to pursue.†

We have seen this illustrious disorganizer laying out his own plan for closing the Mexican war in opposition to the administration; namely, by fencing off what territory we wanted and keeping guard over the spoil, but not so as to leave the whole Mexican republic on our hands as the reward of victory. "Ours is the government of the white man," he declared in disdain; and he insisted that the fatal error of Republicanism in Spanish America had been the effort to place and keep the colored race on an equality with the Caucasian.‡ Calhoun and the Southern extremists had been displeased with the deprecating letters which Cass and Buchanan wrote to fellow-citizens of their own section,—letters which censured the threat of the Wilmot Proviso as unfraternal and irritating, and then added in a sort of confidential whisper that the North had no reason to fear that slavery would ever gain a practical foothold in this new area. "The old formula must be changed," was the imperious edict of the *Charleston Mercury*, and this journal and its friends com-

* Speech at Charleston, August 19; newspapers of the day.

† Jenkins's Life of Calhoun.

‡ 4 Calhoun's Works, 396; *supra*, p. 94.

mended to slaveholding States a platform lately laid down by the Alabama legislature, which proclaimed it to be "the natural and indefeasible right" of each citizen of this Confederacy "to reside with his property of every description" in any territory which might be acquired by the arms of the United States.*

Northern Whigs took new courage from the elections and showed a spirited temper which in the previous session prudence had caused them to curb. Slavery agitation could not subside even for the brief space which preceded the instalment of a new Executive. Gott, of New York State, who represented a strong anti-slavery district in the House, brought promptly forward a resolution which pronounced slave traffic in the District of Columbia a notorious reproach, and ordered a bill reported at once for its abolition. The House passed the resolution by ninety-eight to eighty-seven. Never before had the nuisance been so boldly arraigned which pervaded the very nostrils of the capitol. Slaves, fettered like convicts, passed round the hill in gangs; the human shambles and auction-block were visible from the domes of our national legislature; nor had Washington jail been scarcely yet emptied of the Georgetown runaways who were cooped up there for trying the last summer to dispose of their own persons. Southern members of Congress were greatly excited. They convened in the Senate wing, and fiery resolutions were offered, which, on motion of Stephens, of Georgia, were referred for report at an adjourned meeting set for the middle of January. The House reconsidered, in the meantime, the Gott resolution, and, upon Vinton's motion, postponed final action. Horace Greeley was a member for this session, supplying a brief vacancy which had occurred in New York city. He supported Gott, and was busy besides in a vain struggle, by himself, to abolish mileage and establish cheap postage. When the Southern caucus

December
21-27.

^{1849.}
^{January}
¹⁵⁻²⁸ met again, Calhoun is said to have urged it to present as an ultimatum slavery extension or disunion. Slaveholding States, he contended, ought to secede sooner than submit to the Wilmot Proviso. But Southern Whigs were not of that mind, and Berrien, Houston, and Metcalfe, of the Senate, with Toombs and Stephens, of the House, favored a report of much milder expression. A published address "to the people of the Southern States," was the final result of these conferences among Southern members. It recounted the insults, so termed, which Free Soilers offered to the South; and it counselled "unity among ourselves." Its logic labored, and its tendency was to insidious mischief. Yet, had Calhoun been allowed his way, the language might have been bolder.*

A marked influence in all these Southern consultations was to inflame the Southern mind to resist any application of the Wilmot Proviso as an insult,—insults being, by the unwritten code among chivalrous gentlemen, to be resented and punished, but not argued down. "This accursed treason to the Constitution," was the stigma bestowed upon the Proviso by Calhoun's colleague in the Senate, Judge Butler. South Carolina men were not slow to proclaim that any maintenance of such a dogma would bring about a disruption of the Union.

Yet, after all, the present discussion in the House was aimless and fruitless. Congress turned its attention in ^{February} the latest weeks of the session to the more momentous and difficult issue of governing the new territorial acquisition from Mexico. The House, on the 27th of February, nothing daunted by the Southern address and Calhoun's efforts to organize a Southern slaveholders' party, passed a bill for organizing California as a

* See Washington Union, January 28, which published this address, as having been adopted by 42 to 17, and as substantially Calhoun's own production. But Calhoun's language was probably softened in the document. It is claimed for Alexander H. Stephens that his report was adopted in place of Calhoun's. Johnston's Stephens, 235. But such was not the current impression.

territory with the Ordinance of 1787, a Wilmot Proviso, annexed to it. Memorials had already come in from the inhabitants of New Mexico and California, protesting against the introduction of human slavery in those regions, which protests Calhoun denounced as "insolent to Congress and unreasonable." After a vain effort to drive the Whig representatives from this position, by engraving its own territorial plan, free of the Wilmot Proviso, upon an appropriation bill, the Democratic Senate yielded to the situation, and disagreement of the two Houses blocked all schemes for organizing those territories under the present administration. All that could be accomplished during this session was to pass a bill which extended to California the revenue laws of the United States. New Mexico and California were left in all other respects under temporary military rule as conquered provinces, and the whole perplexing subject was transmitted to a new Congress and a new administration.

General Taylor had ere this arrived in Washington, making his tour to the capital from Louisiana by way of Cincinnati on river steamers, whose progress was blockaded by occasional ice, for the winter was one of unusual severity. In Kentucky he had stopped to confer with his friend Crittenden, the new governor of that State. On the morning of March 3d, the last day of the session, the President-elect, with Clayton and Ewing of his intended cabinet, called the attention of Seward to the vast importance of having some territorial government established for California before this Congress should expire. "I want," said the old hero, bluntly, "to substitute the rule of law and order for bowie-knives and revolvers." Seward was about to enter the Senate on the 4th of March as the successor of John A. Dix, having been chosen to that post by the New York legislature in the course of the winter. Webster, the foremost Whig already of that body, who, at this session, had crossed swords with Calhoun over the latter's new dogma, that the Constitution carried slavery by its own force into the annexed domains from Mexico, appears to have been

author of an amendment to the stranded California bill which proposed to keep the local laws unchanged under military rule until another session of Congress should expire.* With this for a basis of mutual concession, Seward visited several leading Whigs of the House, who caused its adoption with some slight change, but the Senate disagreeing in turn to the proposals, this effort for harmony failed.† A Saturday night of fog and wrangle brought the session to a close, with no territorial governments erected at all, except one for that interior region of the Louisiana purchase adjacent to the head-waters of the Mississippi River and north of the State of Iowa, now defined as the territory of Minnesota.‡ Of this territory, populated by hardy pioneers and enlarged beyond the boundaries finally assigned to it, the chief settlement was at St. Paul and near the falls of St. Anthony, and in the present bill for a temporary government no assertion of the Wilmot Proviso was deemed necessary, for the Missouri Compromise Act already gave it the exclusive boon of freedom. The eastern rays of a

March 4 Sabbath sun dispersed our inharmonious legislators and there was a long and restful calm before the inauguration of Polk's successor upon the noon of Monday.

One single act of legislation left the session notable. This was the creation of a new executive department, styled the "Home Department," but formally described in the body of the act as "The Department of the Interior."§ The idea of such a department was as old as President Washington's first year of office; but sixty years had elapsed before our national development justified putting the idea to practical use. Cabinet officers had at length become overburdened with concerns of a miscellaneous scope which had grown as accretions upon the functions pertaining more immediately to their several spheres of

* See 2 Curtis's Webster, c. 35.

† Letter of W. H. Seward, March 29, 1849, National Intelligencer.

‡ Act March 3, 1849, c. 121.

§ See vol. i. p. 93.

action; and the late war, moreover, with the prodigious expanse of territory and national responsibilities it brought, — not to add our peaceful confirmation in the Oregon country, — furnished arguments irresistible for reorganizing the executive departments. Vinton, ¹⁸⁴⁹ from the Ways and Means, reported accordingly ^{February.} a bill in the House, which went through by a strong non-partisan vote, and the Senate, on the last day of the session, concurred in the measure. The Secretary of the Interior, under this new act, was ^{March.} to be placed upon the same general footing as the other secretaries; his sphere consisting in the supervision of patents, public lands, Indian affairs, and pensions.*

This important act was drafted by Robert J. Walker, the Secretary of the Treasury, whose influence upon Congress throughout Polk's administration had been remarkably strong. Walker was a cunning compound of the statesman and lobbyist, and a man of busy intrigue in either capacity. Through his principal activity had been compassed that legislative iniquity of annexing Texas, by the double-headed plan of 1845, which led up to the Mexican War.† While in office Walker had been the zealous promoter of schemes for building a railroad across the isthmus of Darien; the fast friend of steamship subsidies and of whatever other jobberies might tend to develop American commerce in competition with the world. For warehousing and those other improved facilities in our customs revenues, adapted from abroad, importers owed him their hearty gratitude. He had managed finances with much shrewdness through all the troubles of war, and briskly availed himself of the right moment to place his loans upon the market. Always an alert and bustling little body, moving the wires of various political activities, his feats performed in the cabinet had allayed many of the prejudices entertained against him, and remitted him to private life with something of a solid

* Congressional Globe; Act March 3, 1849, c. 108.

† See vol. iv. p. 484.

reputation. As a statesman his present hobby was to exalt commerce above all other national interests.

The greatest, perhaps, of this Secretary's public achievements had been the tariff of 1846; and notwithstanding Congress had sullenly refused to alter that tariff during the pinch of war, it had worked beneficially for the people. Not even our manufacturers (as Walker could confidently assert upon leaving office) were anxious to go back to the tariff of 1842. Henry Clay did not appreciate that fact when, in a weak moment, he allowed his name to be placed upon the list of Whig candidates for a later time than last. He had opined for the moment that the old Whig thunderbolts — protection among the rest — might be forged over for a new campaign.* But Clay was mistaken. The American people were brooding over matters quite different, — the Mexican War, and the probable effect of that war and its annexations upon the permanency of this Union and the sectional balance of power. Neither the so-called "Democratic straddle" of 1844, nor the "free-trade tariff" which followed Polk's accession, had produced thus far the grinding misery which Clay and the Whigs foreboded. Europe's need of our bread-stuffs might account for it, or the Irish potato famine; but whatever the cause, there was the stubborn result.† In fact, the low tariff of 1846 served this Union through all the vicissitudes of national parties for ten long years and more; nor was it changed in 1857, except to vary some details under new conditions when a further reduction of revenue became needful in order to avoid a surplus.‡ Not a breath of political agitation entered into that change, which was the last one ever made where members from Southern slave States voted. Might it not be claimed, then, that we had reached a resting-point on the dial of economic adjustment, — a resting-point adapted best to an era of peace and when exhausting war

* See Ullmann letter of August 4, 1847; 2 Schurz's Clay, 299.

† See vol. iv. p. 516.

‡ Act March 3, 1857, *post*.

did not strain our resources? This free-trade tendency — since all such questions with us must be questions of tendency and not of final rest — gave in the first place a splendid impulse to American commerce. Our sails whitened the remotest seas. Our flag bore and then brought back. Next, agriculture prospered; and it was most of all the prospect of supplying the wide population of the British empire with American food products, as well as American cotton, that caused the Polk tariff to be enacted after Peel had swung open the gates of British ports invitingly. And had our manufactures been swamped by the interchange that followed? On the contrary they grew and prospered, for that best of all bounties was afforded them, raw materials unburdened by taxation, and the widest possible market with the universe.

If Polk's tariff act had operated favorably, so had the sub-treasury revived from Van Buren. For the past twelve months or more Europe had been convulsed by civil wars and revolution; in France, the election of Louis Napoleon as its first constitutional President presaged already the downfall of a second republican experiment, where men's minds were dazzled by names; bankruptcies and paralyzed industry marked the business situation abroad when Polk retired from office. But our people had suffered no revulsion; our money market was easy by comparison; not a dollar had been lost to the national treasury through depreciation of the currency, and every loan required for prosecuting our costly war had been negotiated above par.*

Our government was at peace with all nations when Polk vacated the Presidency. In the midst of more momentous employments, the negotiation of treaties advantageous to American commerce had not been overlooked by him. The example of treating foreign countries liberally in our own ports elicited corresponding favors, which argumentative diplomacy would have sought in vain.

* President's message, Dec. 5, 1848, Treasury report, etc.

South American powers, German principalities, and even Great Britain's proud kingdom relaxed former restraints upon commerce because we had done likewise.* Two modes prevail for giving international traffic a wider scope: reciprocity, that closer policy of Monroe's times, when specific nations made specific bargains with one another,—a policy which John Quincy Adams summed up, on full experience, as unsatisfying; and liberal trade, which appeals more strongly and more delicately to the generous promptings of mankind. One of the latest fruits of Polk's diplomacy had been a postal convention with Great Britain by which uniform rates were fixed for foreign mail matter.† Prior to that arrangement, ocean postage had depended upon the arbitrary discretion of rival packet and steamship lines, some of which demanded prepayment, while others forbade it. War and the rumors of war had now swept by; our administration which had come in as a lion went out as a lamb. The crown jewels which Polk's strong policy bequeathed to his country were of priceless worth,—Oregon, and all that splendid spoliation of Mexico, whose chief of hidden treasures was California.

Polk's remarkable success as a negotiator and administrator in affairs was due less to skilful handling than to silence and secrecy. Reticence of purpose helped both to conceal a failure and to win from success an admiration unexpected. In methods he was pushing and persistent, aiming straight at his mark, but at the same time adroit and baffling, not to say deceitful over the plans he most cherished. The Mexican people had good cause to reproach him with falsehood, while Dix and Wilmot are among those, once Polk's party friends, who have raised their own issues of veracity.‡ Polk assuredly did not

* See treaties in 9 U. S Statutes at Large.

† This was dated Dec. 15, 1848, and negotiated by our minister, George Bancroft; 73 Niles, 2. Great Britain had practically favored her Cunard line of steamers by subjecting letters carried by the Collins American Steamers to double postage.

‡ *Supra*, p. 93. As to Wilmot see House debates, Feb. 17. 1844.

scruple to dissimulate as to his real intentions, and his repeated misstatements, official and unofficial, are scarcely palliated by that peculiar temperament which made it impossible for him, even when exalted to the highest pinnacle of responsibility, to state a public question as though it had two sides to it. Even at the last moment and just as he was about to retire from public life, a peremptory call of the House compelled him to confess that he had caused the treaty of peace with Mexico to be ratified with a secret protocol, of which our Senate had never been apprised,—a protocol which neutralized the effect of amendments our Senate had made to the original treaty.*

The strong traits of Polk's administration have already been outlined.† It was unquestionably an administration of strong achievements; and all doubts may be dismissed concerning the efficiency of the man who was at the head of it. Bancroft's testimony as a cabinet officer is confirmed by that of Buchanan, who, spontaneously and in private, held Polk up in later years as a model President in various respects: as one who maintained influence among his counsellors by his great reticence, his disposition to keep himself uncommitted on important points of policy until the time should arrive, and his determination not to have the chieftains of embittered factions with rival ambitions about him, but to keep all working steadily for the glory and success of his administration. He ascribed Polk's success in public measures, more than anything else, to his regard for the vital principle of official unity in action.‡ And this premier has recalled

* See Special Message, Feb. 8, 1849, which argues that if the executive interpretation of what the Senate intended was not therein correctly expressed, that protocol did not bind the United States, and we were not harmed by it. This was detestable casuistry. Had Mexico no right to insist upon good faith and honorable dealing? Might she not have fairly insisted that we were debarred from disputing so solemn an act, to her injury?‡ Vol. iv. p. 497.

† "However various in views we might have been and often were when entering the cabinet council, after mutual consultation and free

another trait in Polk's management of affairs which he of all advisers was the proper one to discern: all important questions with foreign nations were drawn to himself as far as possible, so that they should be settled at our capital and under his immediate supervision.* Though Mexico was necessarily an exception to such a course of dealing, it was characteristic of a negotiator like this to send to the seat of war a clerk of the Secretary of State with a treaty already drafted under his personal direction as the basis of a settlement. Polk, in fine, had limitations as a statesman, and greater ones as a political manager; but experience had given him confidence in affairs. He had never shirked hard work, and in his own way he faithfully served the people. He was not fastidious; he was not thoughtful of the rights of other peoples, other races, other political parties, than his own. He saw what he wanted, and he toiled with unwearied zeal to fetch it. His motto for Americans and white men was to keep what they had and catch what they could; and upon that theory of public achievement he brought things to pass. Ideality and the highest sense of honor were wanting to such a policy; and while our people accepted his benefits they had too much good feeling to commend his craft or reward him with their gratitude.

The heavy burden of official cares and that heavier burden of popular obloquy which this lesser son of Tennessee sustained in silence were more than his health could well endure in the later prime of a life which had been loaded down with public activities. Polk had no humorous perception, no elasticity of spirits. His wife, an exemplary woman, was too devout for social levities, and their marriage was childless. That old and sorrowful look which many former acquaintances commented upon when he journeyed North, was visible at Adams's funeral and on the few other occasions of this latest winter

discussion we never failed to agree at last, except on a very few questions, and on these the world never knew we had differed." 2 Curtis's James Buchanan, 72.

* Ib., c. 3.

when the President appeared in public. His silvery hair, combed to the back of his head, gave to a face of serious demeanor an almost venerable look. After the inauguration of his successor on the 5th of March, he made a short tour southward in company with ex-Secretary Walker, and in due time reached Nashville and his home. His serious illness there was announced shortly after, and June 15. next his death. No public obsequies were arranged in his honor. The opposition press, which had execrated him as he left the capital, spoke more gently of him in his secluded grave,—of the quiet, unostentatious life he had lived; of his strictness and devoutness as a member of the Presbyterian church; of his freedom from the Southern vice of duelling, and from dissipation in all its forms; of his irreproachable character in private, and finally, as a public man, of his long and distinguished services to the country. After this brief-spaced decent tribute Polk's name was seldom publicly mentioned. Over the fruits, sweet and bitter, which his administration had cast so abundantly into the lap of the people, there sprang up very soon sectional quarrel and contention, but the gatherer of those fruits was very soon forgotten.*

Among Whig members of the present Congress who retired as their party came once more into power was Abraham Lincoln of Illinois. His State, by a small majority had chosen Cass electors; his district, too, went Democratic, while he, for some reason not clearly known, had declined to stand again as a candidate. While Gott, with his resolution in the late session, made hotter the flames of civil strife, Lincoln, who looked to accomplishing freedom's general ends with the least irritation possible, framed a bill for abolishing slavery in the District of Columbia. This bill, which is said to have elicited the approval of Whigs at such opposite poles as Mayor Sea-

* Ex-President Polk's papers were methodically preserved as though for a later vindication, and copies of those papers were made by the late George Bancroft, a few years ago, for a literary purpose which advancing age compelled him to relinquish.

ton, of Washington, and Giddings, was moderate, just, and considerate; it proposed recompense to owners and a gentle scheme of emancipation, one of whose features was a temporary apprenticeship of the negro. But party capital and not practical relief was the bent of the present House on that particular subject, and Lincoln's measure, though characteristic of his patient and honorable disposition to fit accomplishment to the times, went into the usual limbo of Congressional projects. Little as our self-made statesman was fascinated by the cheap splendors of salaried life at the capital, he yielded to temptation far enough to join the throng of Whig office-seekers who pressed about the White House after Congress adjourned, to take his chances in the lottery. The prize he sought was the modest one of Commissioner of the Land Office, a position for which Illinois had some peculiar claims, but that was gained by a fellow Whig of Illinois who pushed for it more forcibly. Lincoln drew something better, indeed, than a blank, for the administration offered to appoint him governor of Oregon. But that post had no attraction for one whose heart was at home, and Lincoln, fortunately for his future, withdrew to private pursuits, leaving his aspirations to grow stronger with his personal influence. Though modestly esteemed as a public man, he left Washington with so favorable an impression formed in a single term, of his sound judgment, honest sincerity of purpose, friendliness with men of every kind of political opinion, and his unique personality besides, that more than one correspondent of the great Whig journals expressed a warm regret for his departure.*

* Newspapers; Holland's *Lincoln*, c. 9; 33 *Century Magazine*, 525-533.

CHAPTER XIX.

ADMINISTRATION OF ZACHARY TAYLOR.

PERIOD OF THIRTY-FIRST CONGRESS.

MARCH 4, 1849—JULY 9, 1850.

THE Deity that overrules all things punishes the sin of covetousness, not necessarily by withholding or depriving of the coveted object, but by planting in the wrong-
1848ful acquisition a penalty. The men or the people who yield to inordinate desires are permitted to be further corrupted by gaining what they strive for. Texas, New Mexico, California, all that vast sweep of territory which we had wrested from Mexico by fraud or conquest, was ours irrevocably, and perhaps forever. We peopled that glorious area with our own inhabitants; we gave it the blessing of a better civilization; under our influence and protection the wilderness blossomed. Time, in fine, has welded that whole annexation so firmly and indissolubly with the great American Union, that the earlier misrule of Mexico is almost forgotten. In one sense it was better for society that the acquisition was made. The scorching illustrations, drawn in Corwin's famous speech from Napoleon and modern Europe, have found here no parallel; in American history no infatuated warrior has bent the Republic to his personal ambition; our boundaries have not expanded like those of France to shrink back once more to their original limits. Yet divine retribution followed as quickly as that speech predicted, and the delusion of "manifest destiny" brought its appropriate punishment. That the iniquitous war with Mexico drove from public confidence the politicians and the political set by whom it was provoked, our last chapter has shown. Triumphant success to our arms did not turn the torrent of popular odium which the prosecution of such a war excited. That, to be sure, was temporary, and while the

first sense of guilty wrong lasted after the secret motives of the war had been fully revealed. A wider retribution followed, as the scroll of Divine requital slowly unrolled. In less than five years North and South were nearly in civil conflict to settle the social status of these new territories; in five years more the rivalry, still further strengthened, was transferred to other territory and other new projects for slave conquest; another five years saw civil disruption and a civil war such as the world had never witnessed; and before twenty years had elapsed slavery and slave confederacy had melted alike in the fervent heat of a strife which began in this unhallowed attempt to wrest the domains of a weaker republic for the spread and perpetuation of slave institutions in the stronger. Freedom was the final result and the only one consonant with eternal justice; but that goal was not reached without terrible cost and sacrifice to both North and South, for men of each section had erred exceedingly.

But truly this new acquisition was a noble one, could we but have gained honorably that rich and picturesque domain. With Texas, California, Utah, and New Mexico, that broad zone was now complete which girdled the continent from ocean to ocean. This proud and independent republic, within sixty years of that compact existence which began with the Mississippi for a last border, had crossed that broad river and stretched its empire to the remote and undefined peaks of the Rocky Mountain chain, and at length, sweeping beyond that mountain barrier, stretched in its last and fullest expansion to the Pacific. The two great seas of the world now washed the one and the other shore; and a great orator's imagery * recalled the artist's last finish to the shield of Achilles, when he poured round the waves of living silver which "beat the buckler's verge and bound the whole."

Of these fair domains torn roughly from the embrace of Mexico, California was the fairest. New Mexico seemed

* Webster's Speech, March 7, 1850.

at that epoch, arid, sterile, and mountainous ; its mines were hidden, its soil produced little ; its uninteresting population occupied chiefly the dull trading-town of Santa Fé. In Utah's Salt Lake valley the Mormon exodus found its Canaan in the midst of an almost unbroken solitude. But California — the "Upper California" of the Mexican Confederacy — with its soil and climate of rich variety, its spacious harbors, and that beautiful stretch of scenery which extended from the Sierra range to the seashore, offered beyond comparison the desirable field for our secular enterprise, — almost a waif of jurisdiction when transferred to our flag, little governed, little garrisoned ; its inhabitants Indians for the most part, and the real potentate of the region one Captain Sutter, a large landholder of Swiss origin who had once served under Bonaparte,* and whose adobe fort, near the present site of Sacramento, which bore his name, was the radiating centre for all settlements of this great valley. California's easy conquest we have described already.† There was nothing thrilling, nothing romantic about it. Commodore Stockton and Colonel Fremont made the subjugation complete, each taking a share in the glory of governing ; and then came General Kearny in season to claim precedence of rank, and precipitate a triangular quarrel of no great interest to posterity. The ambition of both Stockton and Fremont took a political direction. Stockton went home, and chosen to represent New Jersey in the United States Senate, he resigned from the navy. Fremont, at Kearny's instance, was court-martialled ; he was adjudged guilty of disobedience and pardoned ; but guilty or innocent, our young pathfinder attracted the common sympathy, and in his impetuosity seemed to personify all that was truly picturesque about this distant enterprise.‡

Lumbering, tillage of the soil, and ownership of the spacious harbor of San Francisco, had been the main objects proposed by the annexation of California to the

* Waddy Thompson's Recollections, c. 25.

† See vol. iv, p 535.

‡ See in detail 17 H. H. Bancroft's United States, cs. 11-17.

United States. But another advantage, which threw all these into the shade, was revealed at almost the moment of its formal transfer. It was a land of treasure trove. Gold, mineral wealth of inestimable worth lay ready to tempt cupidity, in rock, in crevices, in river beds, the moment these possessions became ours. A century earlier, so runs the story, Jesuits found gold in this region and were expelled in consequence. Minister Thompson's book gave gold and silver a passing mention, while describing the resources of California.* Mines nearer the heart of Mexico, which had been lately pledged for the security of British loans, once yielded a handsome return, but forty years of civil disorder left them unproductive. Indeed, since 1810, products of the precious ore in both hemispheres had fallen off greatly, though the yield in the New World far exceeded that of the Old. Hitherto, however, bowels of gold and silver had belonged to the sicklier races; we, like our hardy English progenitors, had boasted rather of our coal and iron, products for common use. The gold region of the United States, as hitherto defined, lay along the mountains which bordered Virginia, North Carolina and Georgia; and science, capital, and skill, while slavery infected that region, had all been wanting to develop or so much as locate these resources. But now this republic was on the verge of a discovery which would impart a new influence in the civilized world, and give new values and a new impulse to finance and the industrial activities. Had not God guided us? Was not the Union working out some sublime mission of manifest destiny? Here within one hundred and sixty thousand square miles of our Mexican conquest, within that country alone, west of the Sierras, which was drained by the Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers, was more gold probably than would pay the cost of our late war a hundred times over. Such was the confident report of our military commandant in California, dated six weeks after peace had been officially proclaimed at Washington; and our

* Waddy Thompson's Recollections, c. 25.

President, submitting that report to Congress in its ensuing session with his farewell message, found a new justification of the policy he had pursued toward Mexico.*

That splendid and startling discovery was made in fact before the actual conclusion of a treaty with Mexico, and California's dwellers were wild with excitement at the time when distant representatives of the late belligerents ratified the compact of transfer wholly ignorant of the news. Nor did the earth first open her secret to the peering eyes of the American conquerors who occupied the country, but to Captain Sutter, the Swiss lord of the Sacramento, and an American mechanic from New Jersey in his employ, named Marshall. Some miles above Sutter's fort, on the American fork of the Sacramento, a saw-mill was in course of erection for turning some pine forests near by into lumber. Marshall, with a gang of workmen, comprising native Indians and a few white Mormons, was engaged upon the work. While widening and deepening the channel, where water was let on to run the mill, yellow particles were brought down by night, mingled with the loose mud and gravel, which Marshall discovered as he sauntered along the tail-race the next morning. Suspecting the truth, which was confirmed by another night's sluicing, he gathered some of the glittering grains in his pouch, and rode down the stream to Captain Sutter, dismounting at the fort on the afternoon of the 28th. Sutter weighed the ore, applied such tests of science as he could command, ransacked his little library upon the subject, and pronounced the substance gold. From that moment the news of the discovery spread, and men's minds were turned in his little kingdom from saw-mills, flour-mills, herds, flocks, and all that humbler property which hitherto had absorbed his thoughts and theirs, and to quote Sutter's own expressive phrase,—for he could not ride

* Polk's message, Dec. 5, 1848, and documents; Colonel Mason's report, H. Ex. Doc. 1, No. 37

luck firmly at a break-neck speed,—the curse of the discovery was on him.*

Neither Sutter nor Marshall could profit by nature's confidence. They agreed to keep the secret to themselves;

^{February.} of the question by that time, Sutter procured a lease of this region from the Indian natives, and then undertook the more difficult affair of procuring title from the United States. Colonel Mason, the American commandant at Monterey, could give no document; and so far from guarding their joint secret, Sutter and his unwary contractor managed to send the news far and wide, which their humble workmen on the stream had wit enough to ascertain very quickly. Sutter's saw-mill stood unfinished, as hundreds and thousands of laborers pushed by for more congenial work. Within four months

^{March-} of the first discovery over four thousand persons were about the Sacramento, working as if ^{August.} for dear life, dwelling in coarse canvas tents and huts, and coaxing fortune with the rudest implements. Some with bowls, pans, and willow baskets were seen washing out the gravel and separating the shining atoms by the hand; others worked with the pick and shovel; while some, the luckiest of the lot, found places where they could pick gold out of crevices in the mountain rocks with their butcher knives, as they lay upon their backs, in pieces which weighed from one to six ounces.†

Fleets of launches, from the sloop to the cockleshell, left San Francisco in early May for the Sacramento saw-mill region, and the town was nearly stripped of its male population in course of the summer. Soon the whole country, from San Francisco to Los Angeles, and from the seashore to the base of the mountains, echoed the cry of "gold, gold, gold!" The house was left half-built, the field half-planted; women looked after the shop. Foreign vessels began to arrive; but before they could

* See 18 H. H. Bancroft's United States, c 2

† Colonel Mason's report; 18 H. H. Bancroft, cs. 3, 4.

unload, their crews deserted for the "diggings." Mexicans, scarcely less than Americans, caught the gold fever, and joined in the headlong rush for riches. And quickly as sails or steam could bear the tidings to different points of the compass, adventurers hastened from China, from the Sandwich Islands, from Australia, and from the whole Pacific coast between Vancouver's Island and Valparaiso.*

It was not until Lieutenant Loeser reached Washington in person, bearing Colonel Mason's official despatch, that denizens of our Atlantic slope began to realize the force of our new discovery. A small tea-caddy, which Loeser brought with him, full of the yellow stuff in lumps and dust, was placed on exhibition in the War Department. To see was to believe, and to believe was to set the news flying eagerly. Mason's report, indorsed by the President, was published and commented upon by the press of two continents.†

The new year witnessed the exodus of our modern Argonauts. A stream of population, swollen beyond all precedent, drained the drifting elements from Europe, to mingle in a current whose American element predominated. Never again was such delirium known, for it is novelty that makes the blood leap wildly. Those lesser discoveries of gold and silver which followed years later in British Australia and through our own Rocky range were tame by comparison. These seekers of the golden fleece are enshrined among the world's heroes. "Ho for California!" was the rallying cry of the press in our Atlantic cities,—their columns teeming with advertisements of gold-sifters, tents, picks, preserved meats, compasses, mining boots, and all other needful supplies; with rifles and pistols to use against one enemy, medicine, and medical books against another. "California associations" were hunting up men to charter vessels in company or furnish a line of wagons.

* 18 H. H. Bancroft, c. 4.

† 18 H. H. Bancroft, c. 7; 74 Niles; H. Ex. Doc. 1, No. 37.

Two modes were open to choice for making the difficult journey: one by the overland route, requiring delay until spring; the other by water, which, though tedious to the last degree, pleased the impatient who wished to get in motion. The long water route lay round Cape Horn; but the short cut across the isthmus looked more attractive on the map. Sailing vessels for one course or the other had begun departing from Atlantic ports; the number increasing rapidly with each new month, until old hulks were rigged up and sent to sea as long as they could float, and even the whalers forsook their usual prey to engage in this "new catch." The Pacific Mail Steamship Company had been organized already for general trade with our distant possessions. Its first steamer sailed from New York in the previous October, with not a single passenger on board for California; but after doubling the Horn, turning northward, and reaching Panama in the following January, its captain found fifteen hundred persons frenzied and clamorous to come on board as passengers, of whom scarcely one thirtieth part could be provided with state-rooms. Steam and sailing vessels dumped at the isthmus, for many months, on the Caribbean side their parties of adventurers, who worked across to Panama as best they might, to join in the mad rush from the latter port. As the frantic struggle was here renewed whenever a steamer came in sight, the company disposed of all tickets by lot, and allowed none without them to come on board. Among the disappointed hundreds who were left behind, many embarked upon the slow sailing-vessels which improvised a transit, rather than stay idle on shore, or rashly perilled their lives on long canoes of the natives. Meanwhile the swift steamship, for its three weeks' trip to San Francisco, was crowded fore and aft; exercise was clogged; sleep grew fitful and feverish; men rushed and wallowed for their food, each table being twice set; while for successive days amidst this turmoil of monotony the vessel would plough its way through a tranquil sea, as the sun rose and sank pillow'd in a gorgeous sky. Welcome at last

was the haven of San Francisco, as it came into view when the vessel curved the bay of the Golden Gate.*

But the journey overland,— how much more terrible were its hardships than those even of the long, seven-months voyage by sailing vessel round the Horn ! Tedium is the chief torture of those who trust their lives to a carrier. By ocean travelled those indirect gainers by discovery,— the speculator, the gambler, and all that buzzard and miscellaneous horde who come to bring capital into play or pander to brute passions; many to be useful, many to make others worse. But the Argonauts of the plains were the sturdier set,— the miners or the farmers ; and having little to pay for passage-tickets, these contributed their capital of physical endurance. They made of Fremont's reports their guide-book. They travelled by companies together, both for defence and economy's sake. Wagons, animals, provisions, they purchased by co-operation ; and even the penniless had a chance, as drivers or otherwise, to work out a free passage. The perils of those crusaders who took the savage hills of the Gila, or crossed the great American desert to Sonora, need not be dwelt upon. These had their terrible tales to relate. But for the northern route of 1849, that great overland highway, Independence, or St. Joseph, Missouri, was the chosen rendezvous ; and on this frontier of civilization thousands assembled from the eastward in early spring, with wagon trains, waiting until the grass was high enough before venturing upon the broad ocean of the wilderness. From May to early June company after company set forth, until the emigrant trail from Fort Leavenworth on the Missouri to Fort Laramie at the foot of the Rocky Mountains was one long caravan ; and the light of camp-fires shone by night like some unending turnpike of illumination. Tribes of Indians fled, instead of attacking, as the strange line, which comprised pack-mules and every species of wagon, from the “ prairie schooner ” down to the jaunty pedler's cart,

* 18 H. H. Bancroft, c. 8 ; Bayard Taylor's *El Dorado, passim.*

halted in the rich green meadows to enjoy the first and easiest part of the journey. Cholera, which ascended the Mississippi about the time they departed, was their first real scourge; and four thousand or more perished by the roadside from this disease alone. Beyond Fort Laramie that pestilence was escaped, and then came the more immediate hardships of the expedition. Pasturage grew scarce, and the pioneers had to divide into separate trails; subsisting themselves often on nothing more appetizing than the tough meat of their mules or the flesh of noxious rattlesnakes. Up and down stern mountain-peaks, slowly through the South Pass, the toilsome march continued, until the tributaries of the Colorado served as guide. Rest, grateful as on the green spots among Arabian sands, was found in the Mormon settlement of the Salt Lake. Faithful to agriculture and their own vows of isolation, these religious enthusiasts found speedy gain from traffic with the Gentile journeyers. In this fertile valley some emigrants remained the coming winter, dreading to go on; but they who pressed on, strong-hearted, had their worse perils yet to encounter. Through sterile wastes and rugged mountain chasms in the Great Basin, by trails hard to find and still harder to explore, they goaded on their jaded beasts and dragged their own weary bodies; they wandered like sheep, they separated, they went astray. But in August the advance wagons of this first pioneer train began arriving, and by the close of December the last of these overland companies of 1849 had encamped on the western side of the Sierra Nevada; and the great interior wilderness relapsed into its long winter slumber.*

The point of destination for our overland caravan was
1849. Sacramento,—a town located at the fork which
the river bearing that name makes with the Rio Americana. Here, close about the site of Sutter's Fort, a settlement which in April numbered but four houses held

* Taylor's El Dorado; 18 H H Bancroft, c. 9

in October a population of nearly ten thousand. Its streets were laid out at right angles and lined with lonely survivors of the forest trees, which gave the place a primeval and picturesque effect. Values of real estate rose rapidly to enormous figures. A hotel fashioned out of Sutter's saw-mill rented for \$30,000 a year. In activity and enterprise Sacramento outstripped much older towns, and vied this year with San Francisco, though inferior by far in permanent advantages. Miners from the neighboring streams plunged about its poorly lighted streets by night to partake of the coarse dissipations to which drudgers in the camp are prone to surrender themselves,—their boots reaching to their knees, their hats slouched in token that social restraints and all the proprieties of life had been left behind. Gambling and drinking booths, with strains of discordant music, solicited such rough patronage from behind the crimson curtains; and Sacramento boasted, furthermore, the first theatre and the first "female star" that ever catered to a California audience. A woman or a babe in this region of masculine adults was a rare and rapturous delight; for men washed, cooked, and mended for themselves as in frontier barracks.

Tents were pitched along the valley, near Sacramento. The first rude mining in these gulches, with crowbar, pick, and knife, could not yield many harvests. Science repaired waste with economy. The refuse earth held fine particles, which had to be extracted by a process of dry washing, in which the lank and skinny Sonorians, who at last were driven off, proved expert. The very first year of our strange pursuit of wealth saw quicksilver applied to the black sand which diggers in their early recklessness had thrown aside. Then dredgers followed, and sluices, and in course of time quartz-crushing machines, of which hundreds were invented and patented by Americans, all purposing to clear the precious product as frugally as possible. But miners themselves had much faith in luck. In the dry diggings and among deep beds which toilers had left in despair, others who followed

would take out thousands of dollars' worth. Often did a single blow of the pickaxe disclose a yellow treasure; and the overjoyed discoverer, selling out his hole for a handsome sum, would perhaps squander all his gains in gambling and drink, and then take up his tools to try fortune anew. Amid all the wild riot of mining life and mixed races, the Anglo-American was uppermost, with respect for property, and in the midst of wild and summary punishment, such as whipping, expulsion, or hanging to the next tree, a general sentiment in support of social justice. Intruders all, in one sense, upon a wilderness which the United States as owner paramount had taken no steps to dispose of or parcel out by strict title, the claims of each miner were by common consent very fairly respected. Partners might mark out a race, turn the river's current to get at the bed, and acquire an exclusive right so long as their enterprise lasted. The hole of a solitary digger in the dry ravine remained unmolested during his absence, so long as he left his shovel, pick, and crowbar, to show his intent to return. Nor could it be said that these camps of competition for the nuggets made men cold-blooded and avaricious; for, on the contrary, though liable to crime in moments of hot passion, they were usually rollicking, lively, and full of good humor, while thrown together in this unconventional fellowship, exposed to sickness and vicissitude. Bret Harte has touched off the almost conjugal tenderness which "pards" felt for one another, and stories of succor and sympathy among these miners might be multiplied. There was of course a darker side to the picture.*

Of this new country of the golden fleece, not, like that of ancient story, to be visited and then forsaken, San Francisco was destined for permanent lead as the safe seaport and emporium of trade. That first depopulation of its male inhabitants, who rushed to the mines in 1848, was but temporary. Gold brought wealth enough to this

* See Taylor's *El Dorado, passim*, 18 H. H. Bancroft.

metropolis without the need of digging for it. The first influx of adventurers from distant shores by the first of the Pacific Mail steamships which entered this harbor in February ushered in the era of San Francisco's civic greatness. Sail after sail whitened the sky through the months which followed, until by the middle of November, the bay of the golden gate presented a thick forest of masts. Of some forty thousand voyagers who thus entered our El Dorado country, most were detained here in arranging to go inland, and many remained altogether. From a humdrum town of two thousand in February of 1849, its number increased threefold in August, and aided by the return current which set in before winter from the mines, it closed the year 1849 with a population of twenty thousand. And this sudden basis of prosperity was only a beginning. Changes more marvellous have taken place in a later era when rapid communications are pushed on by the iron ligaments of rail and wire; but this was marvel enough for the age, and unprecedented for so remote and isolated a country. Some of the phases and transitions in this bewildering society, which reckoned its old residents as of six months' standing, were noted by that excellent traveller, Bayard Taylor, who came hither to see and describe. In early summer cheap buildings of canvas, plank, and adobe, mingled together in strange confusion. Half-finished sheds were covered with all kinds of signs, expressed in a Babel of languages. Merchandise lay piled up in the open air for want of stores to hold it. The streets were full of a bizarre set of people running to and fro, as strange and diversified as the signs and shops,—Yankee Americans of all varieties, native Californians, Sonorians, Chilians, Hawaiians, Chinese with their almond eyes and long braids, Malays armed with sharp weapons, and others of the human species in whose long beards and sunburnt faces it would be hard to discern any nationality under the sun. Here, in fact, existed the prototype of London's first exposition of all nations. On a long one-story adobe building used as a custom-house, the American flag was flying. All the old

modes of business and money standards were pushed aside. Men freshly landed plunged into speculation, from town lots and lumber down to the latest New York newspapers which were rumpled in one's portmanteau. Houses imported from Canton were put up by Chinese contractors, while merchants of that same race of minute ingenuity gathered up soiled linen and shipped it across the Pacific to be washed and purified. Wages and rents, the prices of all services, all commodities, were enormous. Business upon the most extravagant figuring was quickly consummated; there was no time to chaffer; for if one would not close the transaction another stood ready. After six weeks of absence at the mines the traveller returned to find the tents and canvas houses moving rapidly to the rear, while large and handsome edifices, hotels, market-houses, and the like, occupied their former sites. Montgomery Street, with its ample three-story buildings for half a mile, already reminded a New Yorker of his Wall Street. Later still, in the autumn, might be traced out an actual and expensive metropolis with street after street of solid and handsome stores occupied by enterprising merchants, all betokening a permanent commercial prosperity. No longer limited to the lower declivities and the curve of its beautiful bay, San Francisco now stretched to the topmost heights, and followed the shore around, point after point. But, as in Sacramento, the resorts for eating, drinking, and gambling were still most prominent, and the great want of the town was still a refined society of both sexes, such as flourished at Monterey and Los Angeles, old and sedate towns by comparison.*

Such was the phenomenon, pregnant with great consequences to America and mankind, which greeted
^{1849.} a new Whig administration at the outset of its career. First and more immediately, the result was to people our Pacific slope at once with a hardy race, which under ordinary conditions might not have assembled there in that same generation,—with inhabitants who were free-

* Bayard Taylor's *El Dorado*, 18 H. H. Bancroft, c. 10.

men, free laborers, and lovers of free institutions. Slavery took little part in so eager a struggle for wealth; and whoever from the South chose to join this distant settlement left chains and human chattels behind; for they knew better than to trust the incumbrance of such property to the legal shelter of Calhoun's latest syllogism. A new republic sprang quickly into being as though from the ocean's foam. California, noblest of all our newly acquired possessions, was to all intents a State, ready for co-equal admission, and, beyond all national power of pollution, a free State.

This practical consequence followed inevitably from nature's own operations, and with scarcely the lifting of a finger by our government to help or hinder Congress, in its expiring wrangle, had formulated nothing. It had left the new Executive to confront the strange situation alone; and that, too, with distance and the want of swift communication to add to his difficulties. But honest Zachary Taylor was not the man to shrink from personal responsibilities. He felt that California would be a full-grown State before the new Congress, meeting the next December, could set her off as a territory. Taylor loved his country intensely, and though a slaveholder, had no wish to see slavery extended. Prudence, not less than a sense of justice, demanded that he should guide the organization of this new community into loyal channels, and use the military power which he still possessed, not in a vain effort to overawe or obstruct, but so as to bring this Pacific people into indissoluble alliance with the Union under the stars and stripes.

In pursuance of that idea, the new President speedily appointed Thomas Butler King, of Georgia, a special agent under confidential instructions. In co-operation with our military and naval authorities in California he was to encourage the new inhabitants to frame a popular government and apply to Congress when it next convened, for admission as a State.* California, under

April.

* See President's message, January 21, 1850, and Ex. Docs.

President Taylor's predecessor, had been governed by army officers while Congress kept on the verge of erecting it into a territory. There was Colonel Mason,— he who had officially announced the gold discovery,— superseded in February of this year by one who arrived of higher rank, General Persifer F. Smith. On the 12th of April General Bennett Riley reached California, bearing orders from the Secretary of War to administer civil affairs.

In pursuit of the new instructions from Washington which King brought with him, General Riley, by procla-

^{June-} mation recommended a general election of dele-
^{August.} gates on the 1st of August, to attend a popular convention; and Generals Smith and Riley made a tour with King through the mining districts to interest the inhabitants. In San Francisco and its neighborhood, an element which inclined to set all United States authority at defiance was brought into harmony with the main design. The chief difficulty lay, however, in keeping up the lively attention of men whose minds were immersed in raking up fortunes. The 1st of September was the date and Monterey the place for the meeting of a convention,
^{September-} which in all respects did honor to our common
^{October.} country. Among the delegates, by no means incongruous, were men of native stock, besides the Swiss Sutter, whose zenith was passing; and Americans besides, such as the soldier Henry W. Halleck,* William M. Gwin, afterwards a senator, and John McDougal.† Three days elapsed before the convention organized, with Dr. Robert Semple for President, and all present took the oath of allegiance to the United States.

Some six weeks sufficed in this sober town to frame a State constitution. The bill of rights, the first subject before the convention, caused but little discussion, and

* He was Riley's Secretary of State.

† Native delegates, some of whom had to speak through an interpreter, were apprehensive of change, and felt the burden of permanent residence among this débris of new inhabitants; yet they yielded sensibly to the ruling influence.

section by section was almost unanimously adopted. As for the clause prohibiting slavery — the crucial test before God and mankind — it passed without a dissenting vote; no delegate of Southern birth caring to record his negative against the obvious will of the majority. At first it was thought well to exclude free colored persons from becoming inhabitants, but even that ungenerous provision was on second thought rejected, at the same time that race distinctions were made in the right of suffrage. The constitution, as a whole, was Republican, both in form and principle, modelled upon that of older States, and embodying many of the latest reforms. Contention arose chiefly upon the question of boundary. Some would have stretched the lines to New Mexico and grasped a great wilderness for freedom, as Texas was purposing to do for slavery; but more moderate views prevailed. Practising self-restraint, the convention confined the new State to its natural boundaries, — the mountain chain line, the sea, with the whole intermediate and fertile breadth from Oregon to Mexico. A yellow sandstone edifice — perhaps the only one on that whole Pacific slope fit for so august a body — was the theatre of these deliberations. The new constitution was signed on the 13th of October, and California's convention dispersed, saluted by the stars and stripes. Thirty-one guns were fired from the fort; the last gun in honor of the new State heartily hoped for.*

The people of California voted on the adoption of this constitution on the 13th of November. The day was stormy and the vote was light, but by more than twelve to one the instrument was adopted. At this time the population numbered according to safe estimates about 107,000, of whom more than two-thirds were American. Minerva was the chosen emblem of a State which came into existence full grown. General Riley proclaimed the constitution of California ordained and established; and the new legislature meeting in the middle of December, and a governor, Peter

* 18 H. H. Bancroft, c. 12; Taylor's El Dorado, c. 15.
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H. Burnett, being presently installed by choice of the people, he laid down his civil functions, and in the following year returned from Monterey to the Atlantic seaboard, honored and regretted by those he left behind. He, like the other military officers who had followed the first conquerors of California, avoided the errors of political ambition and sought only the good of those he so signally served.*

The Saints at Utah had not, in the meantime, disregarded the importance of protecting their own domain. The overland journey of this year drew notice to that singular theocracy, whose Salt Lake settlement was perforce a resting-place for our pioneers. As yet the worst evils which Mormonism was developing were covered over, and many who pitied the enthusiasts for their credulity admired the fervor which those of its creed combined with thrifty industry. The tendency of this American age was secular; its worship was of material comforts. Former collisions of the Mormon hierarchy with the systems of our frontier inhabitants in Missouri and Illinois attracted less of national notice than these toilsome journeys to a new cañon beyond the Rocky Mountains.† What a contrast was presented in the two colonizing enterprises of California and Utah,— both full of adventurous hardship; the one enterprise secular and worldly beyond all others of modern times; the other, though secular in its assimilation of the gross forces which secure worldly prosperity, yet furnishing the only example in this century of the rise of a new religion, and of a distinctly religious people separating themselves from society to found a commonwealth. “The land of gold” and the “land of saints” were separated in interests by natural barriers more formidable than the treasure range of the Sierras.

On ground consecrated to the Lord with imposing ceremony, the Mormons had, by 1848, laid out their New

* 18 H. H. Bancroft, c. 12; Taylor's *El Dorado*, c. 15.

† See vol. iv. p. 546.

Jerusalem with broad and spacious streets. And there, at Salt Lake City, a convention assembled in 1849. March, to organize a civil government, known as the "State of Deseret."* The compact of government conformed in most respects to American custom; but while machinery was set up for dealing with Gentile residents and travellers, the Mormon inhabitants were themselves to be governed by the Head of their Church.† Whether this movement looked to independence of the United States or not, the people now constituted a theocracy for themselves and gave control to their spiritual rulers. Brigham Young, the Head of the Church, they next chose for temporal governor, and sent a delegate to Washington in season to present their claim for admission to the coming Congress, with wide embracing State limits.‡ The sincerity of this whole procedure, in the sense of permanent loyalty, may be doubted; it seemed, rather, a bold strike for Federal tolerance of their wish to govern themselves after their religious forms, and be let alone. Not only had the new administration no opportunity to give impulse to the movement, but it antedated by many months the course California pursued under direct inspiration from Washington. Perhaps, after all, the policy pursued by our Whig Executive did no more than to shape out what the Pacific pioneers were ready to shape out resolutely for themselves,—like the medicine with which a physician helps on spontaneous nature's cure.

In New Mexico President Taylor stirred up the elements of self-government, as he had done in California. Similar instructions were sent through military channels; and the sparser population of that old Mexican province were encouraged to form a State government as quickly as practicable and apply to Congress for admission. Emigration hither was not yet great, and such proceedings perhaps were premature. But the treaty of Guadalupe-

* "Deseret," a word taken from the Book of Mormon, signifies a "honey bee."

† See 6 Harper's Magazine, 616; 21 H. H. Bancroft, c. 17.

‡ Ib.

Hidalgo provided for the future admission of these inhabitants as States; and special reasons spurred Taylor to the present policy. Texas, by this time inveterate in voting other jurisdictions into its own confines, set up pretensions to a large portion of New Mexico's most populous district east of the Rio Grande. She claimed that this district had belonged to her before she entered the American Union. Orders of the War Department while Polk was President instructed our commandant at Santa Fé to respect that claim. But the Whig President changed these orders, and directed that while avoiding collision, our commandant should not commit himself upon the merits of that claim, but leave Congress to decide.* Should the people of New Mexico form a State, the federal courts might determine their true boundary with respect to Texas.

Here, and with California, as Taylor afterwards explained himself, he did not interfere, nor exercise any influence to control elections or convention, but left the people to erect and submit to Congress institutions framed after their own preference.†

Zachary Taylor had been inaugurated on Monday, March 5th, soon after the meridian hour, on the customary

^{March.} east portico of the capitol, and with the customary ceremonies. His inaugural address was brief, compact, non-committal as to policy, but expressive of noble and patriotic intentions. His cabinet, all promptly confirmed by the Senate, comprised John M. Clayton, of Delaware, as Secretary of State; William M. Meredith, of Pennsylvania, Secretary of the Treasury; George W. Crawford, of Georgia, Secretary of War; William B. Preston, of South Carolina, Secretary of the Navy; Thomas Ewing, of Ohio, Secretary of the Interior; Jacob Collamer, of Vermont, Postmaster-General; and Reverdy Johnson, of Maryland, Attorney-General. Ewing, worthiest perhaps of the whole list, was the first incumbent

* Secretary Crawford's despatch of March 26, 1849.

† President's Message, Jan. 21, 1850.

of the new department, born in the death-throes of the late Congress. On the whole, it was a respectable cabinet rather than a strong one in the political sense, though strong men were in it.

The hero of Buena Vista was seen for the first time by most of our great civilians when he reached Washington a few days before his inauguration. A man of plain manners and appearance he now showed himself, but neither in manners nor physiognomy so "rough" as the pictorial art of a political contest had described him, nor less "ready" for exchanging civilities than he had been for marshalling the line of battle. The impression he made upon every one was that of honest and genuine devotion to his country, sincerity of heart, fearlessness of purpose; and in all the sectional contentions which soon succeeded, friends and enemies recognized this.* He had, too, to confirm the public confidence in him, what many civilians of prouder intellect were less ready to pass to his credit,—strong sagacity and a facility to grasp, through all films of controversy, the essential thing to be achieved. Not incisive in speech like Jackson, this old soldier was found frank and affable,—one who bore himself with modest sincerity in his new and strange position, who was sensible and practical, not disposed to conceal the strong feelings he felt over grievances he had borne from others, yet in his general mood and bearing benignant.

Taylor had been congratulated by his great rival, Henry Clay, on their first casual meeting after the election, with all that captivating grace in which the latter excelled every one. Webster, that other Whig rival, was among the first of new acquaintances, when Taylor reached Washington, to pay the civility of a personal call. Our new President felt honored and gratified by these tokens of reconciliation after the indifference of the one in the late canvass, and the insult of the other. He appointed a son of Clay's to a foreign post, and made one of his

* See 2 Curtis's Webster, c. 35; Seward MSS. February, 1849.

younger kinsmen a cadet at West Point. A lucrative office he afterwards bestowed upon Webster's only son, though after more delay and hesitation. But neither of these statesmen came into the inner circle of Taylor's confidence, because perhaps their moods were repellent, or because he had his own feelings and disposition to consult. Old and untried in such a position, Taylor felt the need of advice; but he liked best, as Washington had done, to lean upon young and sympathetic men. He wanted not patronage nor condescension, nor to administer as agent of contemporaries who had scorned him. He had grown gray in the national service, as they had; and in his own sphere, which was a responsible one, had exercised authority. Hence he turned naturally, as the weeks went on, to New York's young Senator, who had supported him heartily, and whose promise was above all others in the younger ranks of the party. Seward, like Webster, met the brave chieftain at Washington now for the first time; and his first intercourse showed him that he was too late to advise upon the list of the new cabinet,—that Fillmore, the Vice-President, who was somewhat of a jealous rival, had forestalled him on that earliest of all administrative concerns, appointments and the award of the patronage. A gentle truce soon knit Whig factions of the Empire State into harmony upon the coarser issue of official spoils;* and aided by his good temper on this point, Seward came gently into pre-eminence on that wider range of influence worthy of a lofty and creative intellect. He became chief adviser of the administration policy,—the Hamilton, one might almost have said, of this new warrior President on whom the people depended, only that Seward's counsel and influence kept his own figure in the shade, and shunned to the utmost the dangerous repute of machinator behind the throne.

Crittenden, now translated to Kentucky, had been the personal friend on whom Taylor most relied in making

* Seward MSS. 1849; 1 Thurlow Weed's Life, c. 61.

up his list of counsellors. Abbott Lawrence, of Massachusetts, the "cotton Whig," would have been upon that list; but he declined, and declining was sent as minister to England. William C. Rives, of Virginia, was selected for France. Letcher, Clay's intimate of old, Clay wished to see in the cabinet; but Letcher's lesser prize was the mission to Mexico, where he pined homesick in that "bell-ringing" capital. Webster had waited in his pride for the premiership to be tendered to him; and when it was not so tendered, he felt irritated and mortified. The first summer's development found him wrathful and antagonistic; and as one who knew him well has said, Webster's "antagonism was tremendous."* Clay himself — far more complacent, because he had laid aside the weight of worldly ambition — wrote more than once that, while the President and most of the cabinet had treated him kindly, yet his relations with this administration were more friendly than confidential.† Neither one of these great men could forbear, in his private correspondence, to prove by casting up the figures of 1848, how he, instead of Taylor, might have been President, had friends in the Whig convention been true to him.‡ Seward's breeding, and the reputation he brought with him as a Whig governor, made his entrance into national life an easy transition. Not feverish over abstractions, but cool, adroit, and ever bent upon making the best of circumstances, he was safest among anti-slavery guides for the times, because he kept to the safe limit of the Constitution and the laws. But within those limits he was strenuous and uncompromising. The old warrior and the young statesman took a liking to one another the moment they met, and in a few months they were strong friends. Each had the courage of convictions, that in which

* Robert C. Winthrop's Memorial Address, Nov. 25, 1876. See Peter Harvey's Reminiscences, 178, describing how Webster opened his pent-up feelings to him on a summer's ride of this year.

† Clay's Private Correspondence, 1849-50.

‡ Cf. *passim* 2 Curtis's Webster, c. 35; 1 Coleman's Crittenden; Clay's Private Correspondence.

Northern statesmen of the day were chiefly wanting. Each liked a simple policy and a humane one.* What chiefly interested Seward was to lead the President to the ground of restriction in the territories. His wish had been that the Whig party should preoccupy the ground which Northern Free-Soilers were striving to obtain, and lead in a moral crusade; † to oppose the slave power in its new push for an enlarged boundary, and by circumscribing the evil as the Constitution permitted, to cause national responsibility to cease for its existence. To accomplish this concerned him more greatly than self or patronage; and he declined being placed on any important Senate committee lest he might appear speaking by authority. Clayton, Ewing, and Collamer were Seward's friends in the cabinet; and Seward was concerned in the plan which the President adopted of inviting California and New Mexico to organize State governments and apply for admission.

There were signs and portents in these days
1849. which augurs of the old Roman world would have collated. Zachary Taylor took the oath of office under a gloomy sky, while a raw wind blew from the east and intermittent snowflakes were falling. Bloody war, with Hungary's vain struggle for independence, agitated eastern Europe. Riot and incendiary fire attended Tory outbreaks over the Canadian line, in the course of which the buildings of a provincial parliament were burned. Late in the spring, within our national borders a great crevasse and river flood made much distress about New Orleans city and the lower Mississippi; and soon afterwards from that same unwholesome region stalked forth the black plague of cholera to ravage the Union far and wide in course of the summer, and reap its victims in all directions so remorselessly that a day of national fast and prayer was proclaimed to avert so terrible a scourge.

* Thurlow Weed's Life, c. 61; Seward MSS.

† Weed was of this opinion strongly. See 2 Weed, 230.

But startling beyond all other portents was that pioneer band moving westward through the Rocky wilderness, upon whose flank hovered that same cholera pestilence, breathing its rotten breath, but powerless to pursue far; and those ocean Argonauts, besides, whose faces were set to the same remote land of the golden fleece. The North did not alone watch this portent. Southerners, less identified with the movement, slaveholders of the Gulf, observed it with undisguised dread and dismay. And when presently it was revealed that a new free State was forming which would cover the best breadth of that whole Pacific slope, conquered most of all by Southern arms in the interest of Southern expansion, Southern men realized that Nature had turned the tables upon them, — that the fruits of our Mexican conquest were ripening for those who opposed rather than for those who incited it. To free California, what was slavery's sure counterpoise? The old equilibrium of sections was destroyed; freedom overbalanced the scales of national influence; and at no distant day the system which they had pressed to extend would be at the mercy of a numerical majority whose inner wish was to eradicate it. True, there remained the bulwark of the Constitution to resist encroachments upon the institution in States where it already existed. But to remain local and sectional, and not to propagate and justify their own peculiar heritage, against the world's philanthropy, was the very root of bitterness to this haughty and high-strung race of proprietors, who hardly believed that freedom, once gaining the upper hand, would respect the restraints of the Constitution. "For the first time in the history of our country," writes a Southern governor impetuously, "the North is dominant in the federal government." *

It was startling to see Southern Whigs of the Gulf States join in that jealous hue and cry, — men like Alexander H. Stephens, who but a few weeks since had resisted Calhoun's artful efforts to unite all the slaveholders

* 2 Claiborne's Life of John A. Quitman, 36.

of Congress in a bold menace of disunion; or like Toombs, who had confessed so confidentially that California could never be a slave country, and that in organizing the territories Southerners had only the point of honor to serve.* Such men feared, perhaps, that the home sentiment would ebb away from them if they pleaded still for loyalty. The opposition made great gains in Georgia this year; Tennessee, too, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana,—almost all the staple-raising States,—voted disunionists into favor not less than the Democracy; Whigs and friends of the Union in that region were almost silenced. Even in border Kentucky, a convention which had been chosen with some thought of putting emancipation into the new State constitution, refrained from so glorious a reform, and kept firm to slavery. But Southern Whig leaders more likely were themselves carried into the current by their own excitable feelings; for incorporated with their whole system of property and stability were these institutions they lived under. Slavery united the masters naturally in a common cause; and to be bred a master in these days was to be brought up under pampering influences which made one imperious, self-indulgent, disdainful of the plodding toilers of the North, and ready to throw logic to the winds when temper was touched. The honor of a gentleman had but one code,—to maintain one's point, not to discuss its righteousness. Slavery was a training-school of rebellious temper, of impatience to force extremities.

The Union will soon dissolve (thus argued the Southern Whig); we have ultimately to submit or fight; the anti-slavery feeling and the feeling of dismemberment may be abated, but it will return with increased force. "It is the idea of the age, the monomania of the century in which we live."† And slaveholders who, like Stephens, saw in political dissolution a resistless fate, apprehended that when the congressional majority in

* 1 Coleman's Crittenden, 335

† Johnston's A. H. Stephens, c. 24.

House and Senate was once footed up against the South, the North would harass, annoy, and oppress.

It was a Calhoun hypothesis that the North was aggressive, aiming at slavery's ultimate extinction, subservient to the wishes of the Garrison abolitionists. Calhoun had pealed that alarm so long and so incessantly that the South was waking to the feverish fear that all this must be true. It was not true. Whatever might have been the work of time upon this slave problem under different and unforeseen conditions, the consecutive order of events justified no such forebodings. Violent agitators, themselves disheartened at the little headway their cause was making in the free States, had resolved themselves into disunionists and fire-eaters as inveterate as any of the South. The mass of Northern people, peace-loving, attached to the Union and its broadening prosperity, were sensitively disposed to observe the restraints of the Constitution, and especially the negative ones. It galled them, to be sure, to have to engage in slave-catching and sending back colored men from their own soil. They grew stronger every year in the belief that slavery was of itself a great moral evil, and a degradation to the American name. They prospered and attained to numerical superiority without taking pains to ask the cause or consequences, and thought less of using power than of washing their hands of responsibility for a wrong they were bound to permit. It was slavery's aggression, slavery's war, slavery's ambitious stretch for new domains, beginning with Texas, which inflamed their honest resistance. To check the spread of slavery into free territory was the whole basis of their political opposition to the system, though irritation must necessarily have arisen in lesser points. Nor would Northern voters have combined even in that opposition, were it not for the well-founded conviction that such resistance, such legal prohibition of slavery in new territories, was vested by the Constitution in Congress. Jefferson had made the first precedent in that direction. Madison and others of our early fathers upheld the right, and so too had Calhoun in the better days of his national

ambition.* But Calhoun was now perversely bent upon destruction. Misrepresenting the free section as all the while the aggressor, and warning his fellow-slaveholders that they would soon be forced to choose between abolition and secession, he set himself to breaking cord after cord which bound the slave States to the Union, so as to bring in the latter alternative by way of anticipation. Controversy broke out between him and Benton; the latter denouncing the late address by Southern members of the Union as treasonable. Though death stole over him, his last unyielding efforts were given to uniting a strong sectional party of slaveholders, and bringing the South into convention. "If you should ask me," said he, on one occasion, "the word which I would wish engraven on my tombstone, it is *nullification*." But his speculative heat had forged a word still more portentous for his monument, and that word was *secession*.†

There were younger and brilliant sons of the South, disciples of this dying statesman, who vied to wear his mantle. Two of them were identified with the graceless State of Mississippi, military in their mien, gallant, but domineering. Both were State-rights Democrats, whose creed was to propagate slave principles, leaving the permanence of the Union to take its own chances. They were Jefferson Davis, whom we have seen in the Senate, and John A. Quitman. Less prudent than his associate, who was heedful of obstacles, Quitman was intense, far-reaching as through a telescope, radical and positive in ideas and impatient of restraints. He had labored for Cass in the late campaign, since which the Democrats had spontaneously nominated him for governor of the State and elected him by a large majority. His inaugural ad-

1850. dress for the new year was full of the rebellious January. and proselyting spirit which was stirring the South like a breath from Lucifer. "The Union consists of equal co-ordinate sovereignties," he argued; "and to the institution of domestic slavery, entwined in our political

* See vol. iii p. 167.

† Jenkins's Life of Calhoun, *passim*.

system and inseparable from it, without destruction to our social fabric, is attributable as much as to any other single cause the rapid advance of our country in its career of prosperity, greatness, and wealth. We do not regard it as an evil; we have a right to it above and under the Constitution of the United States; we cannot give up that right; we will not yield to it."* Would, for consistency's sake, that this eloquent and impassioned orator had been born, like Davis, on a plantation; but Quitman was of New York origin, reared through his youth upon free soil. Slaveholders by adoption were always the most zealous in the faith, for they felt that their light must be shown.

Men who contend for the right of robbing inferior beings of their freedom will not scruple to appropriate, if they can, the domains of a weaker government. Quitman had left the service angry because President Polk would not close the Mexican conquest by incorporating that whole republic bodily with the United States. His thoughts turned next and constantly to Cuba; dreaming, like others of this school, of Southern empire, of a Southern Confederacy hereafter. But the correspondents of slavery expansion sought an earlier counterpoise to California. Their plan had already developed. Texas, under her terms of admission, was already licensed by Congress to erect new slave States out of her jurisdiction. Texas, then, was to extend her grasp over the whole acquisition of New Mexico east of the Rio Grande, claim a national cession as her own, and cover all for slavery. Quitman and some other Southern governors were pledged to sustain the plan. And as the Union had fought for the sake of extending the boundaries of this rapacious State in one direction, so civil war was plotting against the Union in return, that those boundaries might advance in another.

This political turbulence of parties was felt when Congress gathered on the 3d of December. Sectional feeling was on the increase, Southern Whigs insolent, ^{1849.} Northern Whigs indisposed to yield the advan- December 3.

* 2 Claiborne's Life of John A. Quitman, 21, etc.

tages of good fortune. As the tide of elections had been running somewhat adverse to the administration, the House was very closely divided, and between the radicals, who were splitting off on one side or the other, the Whigs lost control of it. Both Whigs and Democrats held their caucus, and the former had scarcely opened when Toombs offered a resolution pledging opposition to all legislation on the subject of slavery whether in the territories or the District of Columbia. This proposal was laid aside, and because the caucus would not agree to it, eight Southern representatives, led by Toombs and Stephens, left in anger. Robert C. Winthrop was renominated for Speaker, a man upright and true, but of patrician manners, and (as he said of himself) incapacitated, by his spirit of moderation, for giving satisfaction to ultraists anywhere and on any subject.* When the House met to organize, Howell Cobb, of Georgia, the nominee of the Democrats, led by seven votes on the first ballot,—Free Soilers and the Toombs seceders scattering their votes among other candidates. The balloting went on from day to day, no one gaining a majority, and on the thirty-sixth ballot

Winthrop declined to run longer. A coalition ^{December 12.} of Democrats and Free Soilers brought William J. Brown, on the fortieth ballot, within two votes of an election, when it was shown that he had bargained off his committees and Southern men dropped him. Once more the contest closed between Cobb and Winthrop; the Senate adjourning meantime from day to day, transacting executive business but not that of legislation. Nearly three weeks of the session were thus wasted, when the House agreed finally to amend the rules for once so that a ^{December 22.} plurality should elect. Upon this understanding a sixty-third ballot was taken; Cobb had 102 votes, Winthrop 100; there were twenty scattering votes, and Cobb was declared Speaker. Opponents regarded this rising son of Georgia as the fairest and best man on the pro-slavery side.†

* 1 Winthrop's Speeches, 634.

† Congressional Globe; newspapers of the day.

There was just time left, before the Christmas holidays, for Congress to receive the President's message, dated twenty days earlier. It was brief, scarcely half the average length of his predecessor's prosy documents; a frank and faithful exposition of the national situation, replete with facts, but sparing in comment; modest — and, possibly, too much so — in what it recommended.* What the President had to say of California and the new territories was most pertinent and of course absorbed attention. He favored most heartily the admission of California as a State at once with its anti-slavery constitution. As the people of New Mexico were taking steps likewise to frame a constitution after their own choice, he advised that we should await their action, and abstain from introducing those sectional topics which had produced such fearful apprehensions. This was the President's ground, and in a special message, a few weeks later, he stated it more explicitly.† However its details might have varied or deserved variation, the cardinal idea was to keep the admission of California distinctly in the front as the present and pressing object of legislation, and remit all other issues involving angry recrimination between freedom and slavery to the background.

Taylor's plan was simple, sagacious, and eminently moderate. It was just and practical, and suited better than any other the general temper of the country. It avoided all Congressional extension, for the present, of the Wilmot Proviso,—the point upon which the whole South at this time had become very sensitive. Northern men, surely, needed not to hazard the Union on a punctilio of expression when they had its substance. But for that very reason the plan was less acceptable to Southern members, many of whom, not satisfied with a literal concession of this kind, saw that its probable substitution was a Wilmot Proviso grafted into new State constitutions by the will of the settlers. Webster lanced the difficulty,

* Congressional Globe; newspapers of the day.

† Message, January 21, 1850.

though much too severely, when he likened the plan later to poor King Lear's proposal to shoe his horses with felt and steal behind his adversaries. This was no madman's freak, impossible of execution. The South had been wrought up to a frenzied pitch where the assertion by Congress of the Wilmot Proviso would have been resented like a blow in the face; but the vital principle of that Proviso was not to be abandoned, and it was practical statesmanship to adhere to that principle but avoid all needless and irritating assertion. This was the pith of the President's plan, and as a Southerner he understood the temper of his fellow-citizens. They were not reasoning; they were angry over their wounded honor. "My Southern blood and feelings are up," wrote one of them who had meant no treason, "and I feel as if I am prepared to fight at all hazards and to the last extremity." *

The House wrangled along in the blind and *ad captandum* way common to popular assemblies where no master mind directs; and mischievous propositions, meant for political effect, shared the time with personal vituperation. The spell of the "old man eloquent" was missing. Moderates could not soothe the strife of tongues, nor radicals carry their point. All inspiration, for the time at least, was from that other body beyond the rotunda. Upon the Senate chamber, then, that segment of narrow space crammed with immortal intellect, was fixed the gaze of the representatives, and the attention, besides, of the whole country. Never, so long as that room was occupied for legislation, boasted it greater talents and eloquence; its chief deficiency was in depth of conviction. Fillmore, the Vice-President, occupied the chair with an amiable dignity,—a man of intelligent aspect, blue-eyed, with hair thick and slightly silvered. Shaggy Sam Houston of Texas was here, with coat of queer cut, and, like Bell and Benton, a Senator of the old Southern school

* A. H. Stephens's Life, 237.

who loved the Union better than any State. And, besides illustrious men who sat here before Taylor's term commenced, were two remarkable accessions, Salmon P. Chase of Ohio, and Seward, of whom we have spoken. These two, almost alone in Congress in these years, spoke with the full forecast of coming years upon the slavery problem,—ably and courageously, too, and without the customary taunts. Seward, the right-hand man of this administration, was a progressive Whig, while Chase, who had little faith in either the courage or the progressiveness of that party, wished more hopelessly to array the Democrats against slavery's expansion, so as to cleanse the nation's hands of guilt. Chase was professedly Free Soil, Democratic by antecedents, and chosen by a coalition of elements in the Ohio legislature over the Whig Ewing, now of the cabinet.

Here, too, in the chamber of oratory, was seen for the last time, after the lapse of many years, that immortal triumvirate, imperial in peace, "sometimes in opposition, sometimes in conjunction, almost always in rivalry," whose influence on public affairs while they lived was greater than that of any other three men of their times, and who, notwithstanding, failed each in attaining the public honor he had deepest at heart. For Henry Clay, who had once taken his final leave of this body, was persuaded by the Kentucky legislature to return. His health was feeble; he sat wrapped in his cloak, coughing huskily at intervals, a conscious invalid. Calhoun, even nearer to death's door, was an irregular attendant, and, unlike his Kentucky adversary, whose last wish was to unite all patriotic hearts, wore his inexorable look; sometimes a sardonic smile crept over his features, but his usual expression was stern and rigid. Webster, personifying in face and figure all that was intellectually majestic and godlike, brooded long and profoundly,—alone of the three clinging still to life and its more selfish ambitions.

Clay had come to the capital intending to remain "a calm and quiet looker-on," as his private letters expressed it.

But all this ill-blood and angry menace, in the midst of which so many fellow-members of the South appealed to him for guidance, stirred the old cloud-compelling spirit within him to allay the storm and harmonize. A pacifier in all great national emergencies, Clay was nerved to strenuous action by the vastness of the difficulty now presented. For the Executive, though of his own party, he seems to have felt an amiable contempt; and in any strait of danger it was his habitual preference to invent a plan of escape sooner than follow the plan of other men. Accordingly, with patriotic ends in view, but, as posterity must believe, most unfortunately for his country's good, he led in a Whig diversion from a Whig President's policy. Not helping to concentrate legislative action upon the admission of California,—which, after all, was the only immediate concern in this agitation,—he conceived the idea of tacking all the other territories, all the other moral troubles between North and South, to the tail of that same solitary issue. He proposed, as a last legacy to his countrymen, a grand compromise scheme for adjusting the moral differences between slavery and freedom, as he hoped forever. This plan he showed by night to Webster, with whom his relations had long been cool and constrained; and upon Webster's grave deliberation whether to support that plan or not hung mighty consequences.*

1850. It was on the 21st of January that the President's plan was fully stated in an executive message. On the 29th of the same month Clay proposed in the Senate his own comprehensive scheme of adjustment. California's admission, he contended, would disturb the equilibrium between free and slave States, and give to the North the most substantial benefits of the Mexican war. To meet this as well as other mutual grievances of the sections, these specific objects should be assented to: (1) The speedy admission of California, with her free-State constitution. (2) Territorial govern-

* See 2 Curtis's Webster, c. 36.

ments in New Mexico and Utah, without any express restriction upon slavery. (3 and 4) The establishment of a boundary line between Texas and New Mexico which should yield slightly to the demands of the former, at the same time paying her a money indemnity for the extinction of her claims to the rest. (5) No abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia without the assent of Maryland. (6) Slave-trade prohibition in that district, as a concession to Northern sentiment. (7) A more effective fugitive-slave law, in the interest of the South. (8) Denial to Congress of all power to interfere with the slave-trade as between slaveholding States. Such were the features of Clay's plan of compromise as embodied in his original resolutions. And except for its trivial exclusion of the hammer and auction-block from under the eyes of Congress, all its concessions favored the South; while the practical consequence of such a scheme was to obstruct free California's admission, as Clay confessed with candor, by loading the other territories on her back and making her the scapegoat for national sins of which she was entirely innocent. There was, however, one feature in the scheme which, had Clay presented it by itself, might without opposing the wishes of the administration have passed on its independent merits; which was to buy out the Texan claims upon New Mexico, arrogant though they were, and avert that pretext for civil war. "Texas has no title," Clay argued, "but at least plausible pretensions."

Fervid with eloquence, as always, Clay appealed strongly for the Union; and yet, one must confess, with that slippery grasp of moral differences which was always his political infirmity. With the South, he argued, the question was one of interest, with the North one of principle; "but," he added fallaciously, "it is easier to make a concession of sentiment than of interest." Not even fellow-citizens from his own section, when he first spoke, inclined to uphold his plan of accommodation; many were positively set against it. Both Foote and Mason insinuated that he turned his back upon the

wishes of his own section. Jefferson Davis went so far as to avow that there was but one compromise possible with the South, one ultimatum; and that was to extend the Missouri line to the Pacific, with a full legal recognition of slavery on every inch south of it. To this replied Clay with solemn emphasis: "No earthly power could induce me to vote for a specific measure introducing slavery where it has not before existed, either south or north of the Missouri line." But from that noble postulate, as we shall see, he was soon drawn, being anxious above all things to conciliate the violent and carry his point.

Clay's second speech on his resolutions showed him to best advantage. Such was the sensation he created that thousands came from Baltimore and more distant cities to hear him. Women, richly dressed, waved their fans, and smiled from the semicircle which surrounded the grave deliberators. Calhoun's chair was vacant by reason of his sickness; Webster too was absent, arguing before the Supreme Court; but most other Senators were in their places, and Buchanan, the late Secretary of State, occupied a chair next to Benton. The orator, who was still unbent with years, rose gracefully and majestically, the tallest man physically among his compeers, and renewing, as it seemed, his prime from the elixir of the occasion. Applause broke out as he stood there, which spread its magnetism to the dense crowd outside the chambers to whom he was invisible, until they lifted up such a shout that the officers of the Senate had to go out to clear the entrance. Then Clay began: his voice and enunciation clear, as of old, his action firm, and his strength for the time so great that he seemed to fling away age and all ailments by the force of his indomitable will. He enchain'd the attention of his hearers hour after hour as he spun the golden thread of impassioned argument. Southern opponents did not this time interrupt him. And when he had concluded, throngs of both sexes gathered round him to congratulate, and women kissed his face, unabashed by the throng of distinguished

men who stood by.* Surely for sympathetic eloquence and all those fascinating powers which win personal devotion, there was no civilian like Henry Clay so long as he lived. And wavering men of his section, who for weeks had hovered about the brink of disunion, felt a strong grasp which pulled them back.

The spectacle of famous oratory for this last of dramatic sessions was not ended. Other master spirits were next to appear with potent spells to save or disunite the country. A few days after Clay's second speech arrived members elect to the House from California; and the news, moreover, that a State governor had been inaugurated, and Gwin and Fremont chosen by the legislature of that State to the Senate. On the 13th of the same month the President submitted to Congress an official copy of California's constitution. A cursory debate was now opened, and Senators one after another stood up to announce what each would or would not give up for the common harmony. Jefferson Davis, who had just been re-elected for a new term, made a speech against the compromise resolutions, in which he contended, as Calhoun had done, that slavery was not local, but an institution of the United States, which penetrated by its own force wherever our flag was carried. Benton confuted this theory; after showing with much learning — for he was a good Spanish scholar — that slavery had been abolished through every square acre of our Mexican conquest. Bell, of Tennessee, submitted a compromise scheme of his own.

March saw the climax of the discussion which Clay had started. Three historical speeches, all different in cast and expression, offered rallying-points for public opinion in different quarters of the Union. Calhoun, Webster, and Seward, in succession, were the speakers. Calhoun's speech, long promised and carefully written out, was the last great effort of his life. The

* A. H. Stephens's Life, c. 24; newspapers of the day

gloom of the sick chamber in which he prepared it deepened its raven gloss; its dismal croak was of disunion. Another crowded auditory listened to that speech, on the 4th of March, which Mason, a fellow-Senator, read from the revised proof;* but Calhoun was present and listened to the delivery, like some disembodied spirit reviewing the deeds of the flesh. It was a strangely haunting spectacle. The author turned half round, and listened as though all were new to him, moving not a muscle of his face, but keeping his immovable posture,—pale, skinny, and emaciated that he was,—with eyes partially closed, until the last words were uttered and the spell was broken. This speech made a striking and ingenious plea for the South and slave institutions; its mystic forebodings were of secession unless the South could gain something. It favored neither Clay's plan nor the President's, nor any other practicable one, as likely to save the Union. As for California, with her "impertinence" in anticipating what Congress might legislate, it wished her severed and put back into the territorial leading-strings where she belonged. It assumed that the North, where abolitionists had been so often mobbed and denounced, was hostile to the South, and with a numerical preponderance would soon crush the institution which his section felt bound to sustain. The only antidote for disunion Calhoun could propose was for the North to give the South an equal right in the newly acquired territory, cause the stipulations concerning fugitive slaves to be faithfully fulfilled, cease agitating the slavery question, and allow the Constitution to be so amended as to restore to the South substantially the power of self-protection it possessed before the equilibrium was destroyed. "If you of the North will not do this," the speech concluded, "then let our Southern States separate and depart in peace."†

* Jenkins's Life says erroneously that Butler, Calhoun's colleague, read the speech.

† 4 J. C. Calhoun's Works.

(Butler replaced due to poor eye sight)

The next great speech was by Webster, pronounced on the 7th of March, after a silence and deliberation on the subject so profound and continuous as to give rise to the most contradictory conjectures among those who knew him best. The legislature of his State had been disposed to brace him by good Whig resolutions, such as he had favored already; but those who were deepest in Webster's confidence restrained all such expressions. Webster's mood was sullen and haughty all the winter; repelling advice, though feeling the pulse of opinion for himself. That "seventh of March speech"—an ominous style, like those ides in the Roman calendar when the stars changed their courses and great Julius fell—made an epoch in Webster's life, and in its full sequences split irreparably the Whigs of the free States. It caused the scales to fall from the eyes of many who had hitherto idolized Webster, and proved the statesman fallible. Webster was well aware, when he delivered it, that it was the most momentous effort of his life. He stood before his own crowded auditory to deliver it, arrayed carefully in his customary suit for great occasions of oratory,—blue dress coat with brass buttons and buff vest. He spoke, except for the two crowning passages, which had the old majestic warmth, with more than his usual calmness and self-command; and friends and foes are agreed that while, in some respects, his opinions may have been held in suspense to the last moment, every sentence of his speech was measured, and every word premeditated.

What, then, was the tenor of that speech? "For the Union and Constitution" was Webster's own christening of it; and he consoled himself for the offence it would give to the conscience sentiment at home upon the slavery question by averring himself, now and henceforth, as "an American," "having no locality but America." Its scope was essentially to approve Clay's resolutions and compromise, though Clay's name was not once mentioned in an oration which was full of caressing compliment to Southern men, Calhoun among the rest. Unlike

Clay, it was for Webster to announce what Whigs Northern born, and with strong anti-slavery convictions like his own, would yield for national harmony ; and really it did seem as if Webster yielded everything. Could anything sound nobler than those two great passages, struck from that profounder conception which makes Webster's inspiration lasting ? "Peaceable secession," which foretold so clearly that Calhoun's theory was impossible, that there could be no "parting in peace" by discontented States. And that no less splendid peroration, worthy of Webster's best efforts, which adjured his hearers to "come out into the light of day and enjoy the fresh air of liberty and union." How broad, how generous, how simply strong the imagery. And yet his adjuration to "liberty and union" had not the courageous ring of that splendid reply to Hayne in other years ; for the orator emerged rather from the shambles, from some cave, reeking with the blood of human sacrifice, and (to use his own words) "full of all that is horrid and horrible." Nor were the fallacious views of slavery here expressed like those which Webster had spoken out in younger years on Plymouth rock. The speech apologized for the institution, put arguments into the mouths of slaveholders, reproached the North with unfaithfulness to constitutional vows, puffed the Wilmot Proviso aside as a useless shibboleth, and gave up the whole cause for Free Soil,* as preached in 1848, no less than the violent abolitionists.

It was the tone, the bias, the coloring of this speech, above all, which made it not only wounding, but deeply exasperating, to Webster's State and section. New England was smitten in the face where she had hoped for a defence. For the great slavery problem in this country, which engaged the earnest thoughts of thousands who were honorable citizens, this speech offered no solution ; for all thought upon such a subject it compressed the philosophy of a sneer. In short, the whole tenor and tone of this production were a surprise to Webster's constituents ; it fell far short of the occasion ; and good Whigs

* *Supra*, p. 110.

said, and not without good reason, that he who hitherto had led freedom's hosts fled on the day of battle.

So intent had been the orator to espouse the grievances of the South that he quite forgot some of the Northern wrongs to counterbalance, and inserted a new paragraph, on the advice of friends, when his speech was reprinted at home.* And there is good reason to think that Webster wavered to the last moment in his dilemma whether to support Clay or the President. The burning words of his utterances in 1848 he could not have forgotten.† Taylor stood upon the ground Webster had challenged him to occupy with him, when he last spoke upon this subject. Indeed, there is some curious testimony on this point, covering the winter of the great statesman's silence. He consulted Free Soilers like Giddings. He congratulated Winthrop of the House upon a speech the latter made in February, which pledged support to the President's policy;‡ and that fellow-citizen, to whom he certainly owed his confidence, was dismayed at the ground his great chieftain took afterwards. Winthrop, like many others, believes the March speech, in its momentous purpose, to have been settled but shortly before it was spoken;§ and in the Seward family the story is handed down that Taylor's administration had verbal assurance from Webster's own lips that he would speak to support it.|| Be this as it may, Webster's only son received an office about the first of March,—that son concerning whose disappointment the year before, Webster had opened his pent-up wrath in private so strongly to a friend.¶ Webster, no doubt, was conservative by training and in-

* This paragraph related to Mr. Hoar, and the imprisonment, under Southern laws, of free colored seamen. The "National Intelligencer" had already circulated southward the original speech, reported *verbatim*, and Northern journals quickly pointed out the discrepancy. The "Boston Atlas" printed the speech as Webster revised it.

† *Supra*, p. 110.

‡ 1 Winthrop's Speeches, 630, delivered Feb. 21, 1850.

§ Minutes of Conversation, January, 1891.

|| Conversation with Hon. F. W. Seward, April, 1890.

¶ *Supra*, p. 151

stinct, incapable of aggressive assault upon the States where slavery was already entrenched behind the Constitution. His mental struggle must have been over freedom's ordinance in the territories, and resistance to new encroachments. All that Webster has revealed of such a mental struggle is very little ; but we know that he fought off all local expression from the Massachusetts Whigs, whose conscience was never stronger, and shrank from being accosted as the standard-bearer against what his mind admitted was a great national evil.* Yet all this while slaveholding Whigs had reason to think that the Massachusetts lion was already in their toils.† And Webster, after he had spoken, hastened to mail a copy of his speech to Ex-President Tyler, with expressions of his "cordial friendship."‡ Friendship, one would think, was an unhappy relation to cherish towards the renegade chieftain who had elbowed Webster from his cabinet when he could not make a tool of him for annexing slave territory.§

The third great speech of March was by Seward. It upheld the President's course, and pleaded for the admission of California under her free State constitution, without extraneous conditions. The young Senator from New York was already looked upon as the Mordecai in the king's gate ; and Southern men blamed the President, one of themselves, for being under such influence. To this new champion of the forum listened all of the triumvirate, gazing silently while he spoke of things strange to them.|| He seemed really younger than he was ; a man slightly built and agile, clad in plain black ; his reddish hair turning brown, but not yet mingled with gray ; his compact head and curving features marked strongest in the profile. Trying, indeed, must it have

* See letters to Rev. Mr. Furness and others in 2 Curtis's Webster, c. 36.

† "I hear," writes Stephens, on the 24th of February, "that Daniel Webster intends to make a speech which will win him golden opinions from the Potomac to the Rio Grande." Johnston's A. H. Stephens, 250.

‡ 2 Tyler's Tylers, 483.

§ See vol iv. p. 437.

|| Seward showed his speech in advance to Ewing of the cabinet, who approved its sentiments. Seward MSS 1850.

been for Seward, on his first national occasion, to face potentates so famous, and yet so distrustful of him. When he first arose he spoke with hesitation, as though his heart failed him, and he seemed commonplace by comparison; but the substance of his speech was striking, and his plain features soon lighted up, until the warmth of his eloquence stirred the whole chamber. He urged broad moral principle, as one who thought the old equilibrium of the sections should never be restored. He condemned all political compromises which involved matters of the conscience; and confidently presaged the power of the American people to maintain their national integrity under whatever menace of danger. This was the speech, long commented upon, which announced the "higher law" doctrine,—that higher law to which all human legislation should conform.

Of all these famous Senatorial speeches, Seward's was by far the most profound, and worthiest of being read in a calmer age. It was full of thought and humanity, and lighted up with prophetic insight. But Calhoun, most of the Olympian trio, was galled by it. The dying statesman had glided in like a spectre on the day that Webster spoke, and taken part in a brief colloquy at the close of its magnificent peroration. More than once did he return, and when Seward spoke he sat riveted, with glassy eyeballs fixed intently upon him. And muttering what sounded like a malediction, he said to friends about him that one with such ideas of "higher law" was not the kind of man to associate with; and in that repelling mood, so fame reports, he left the accustomed chamber never to return.* Calhoun died on the last day of March, an unrepentant rebel. And on his dying bed he told Toombs that he must leave to younger men the task of carrying out his plans.†

* See N. Y. Tribune, April 6, 1850.

† I Coleman's Crittenden, 363. "He was firmly and I believe honestly persuaded," wrote a friend soon after the funeral, "that the Union ought to be dissolved." Ib.

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Benton favored the President's plan, and alone among the Southern Senators sustained it heartily. Experience in the Jackson times had given him confidence that an unflinching Executive could override a disputatious Senate. Various causes were turning this border statesman to an independent course in politics, whose end was orphanage. The question, after all, concerned Whig policy. It was a perilous crisis.

Had Clay and Webster — or had either one of them — stood by their President, history might have vindicated a policy against which rebellion had no just cause for appeal. Sooner or later California's admission as a free State must have been granted if she was to remain a national prize at all, and in all other respects — except the boundary issue with Texas — the territorial question might have been adjourned for twenty years. Without positive action at all by Congress the responsibility rested upon Presidential shoulders, and there the people would have trusted it. But the senatorial drift was to Clay's plan of compromise. Foote of Mississippi, who had blown hot and cold, proposed a grand committee in February, and renewed his proposal after Webster's speech. Foote was a garrulous little man, who wore green spectacles, and made his *début* in this body two years before. His extravagance of speech had often provoked ridicule. But his influence grew as he proved himself irrepressible; and by provoking Benton in this debate to angry menace and cocking a loaded pistol at him, he cut an important figure. Beginning the present term a violent secessionist, his blood cooled down under Clay's influence. In

April 18, 19. April, Foote's resolution was carried and a solemn committee appointed to which the Senate referred the pending proposal to admit California, together with the schemes which Clay and Bell had offered. Of this committee, six were from Northern States, six from Southern, and the thirteenth and chairman was Clay himself.*

* Congressional Globe. The Northern members of this committee were Cass, Dickinson, Bright, Webster, Phelps and Cooper; while King, Mason, Downs, Mangum, Bell, and Berrien, besides Clay, represented slave States.

Webster's conscience was not easy in all these arrangements. He shunned the stifling conference altogether, neither accepting nor declining his place in it, and hastened home to meet his displeased constituents. He declared in a Boston speech that he was determined to persevere in his course regardless of personal consequences. "I shall minister," he said, "to no local prejudices; I shall support no agitations having their foundation in ghostly abstraction; I shall say nothing which may foster the unkind passions separating the North from the South." Southern Whigs, almost incredulous, were pleased that the king of men should stand up to the rack so boldly. "I have hopes of him now," writes Stephens pleasantly from the capital.*

We observed that Taylor's cabinet was not a strong one, politically considered. He made up the list chiefly upon the advice of Crittenden, a border statesman, and while candidly confessing his own personal unacquaintance with public men. It was a geographical blunder, in the first place, to take a majority of one's advisers from within a short radius of the capital. Thomas Ewing, the ablest of them all, owed his place to the creation of a new department by Congress at the twelfth hour. Collamer, New England's representative, though incorruptible and a man of solid worth, had yet his spurs to win; and from States westward of Ohio there was no cabinet officer at all. Crawford and Preston from the South were almost nonentities in a national sense. Reverdy Johnson, of Maryland, though an able lawyer, had no political skill. Neither had Meredith, representative of the great Middle States, and the head of the treasury,—another man with professional methods less fitted for polities than for polished society. In a word, this was a conservative cabinet, composed of men respectable and to be honorably mentioned before they were tried; but it was not the cabinet for such a crisis, and sooner or later Taylor would have

* Johnston's A. H. Stephens, 254.

been forced to reorganize for his own ends, as Jackson did.

In any such reconstruction of the council board, Clayton, Ewing, and Collamer would well have been retained. Clayton, the Secretary of State, had no commanding gifts, and such as he possessed shone better in debate than in the transaction of affairs. He was of a kindly and somewhat indolent disposition, promising all things to all men, and in his new station reputed leaky as to official secrets. In a jovial way he used to speak of his own "colloquial eloquence." * A good scholar, nevertheless, courteous, highly honorable in all the relations of life, Clayton, who was ripe in public experience, proved himself at least a sagacious and prudent counsellor. On the slavery issue, as might be supposed, he was flabby, like most other border slaveholders,—easy-going, in fact, rather than enlightened or philanthropic. But the people of the free States at this time liked him for holding aloof from those Southern conferences which followed Taylor's election, and keeping his name from the manifesto which Calhoun was earliest in concocting.† That course was much to Clayton's credit, though after all the merit of it was negative.

Clayton, while Secretary, negotiated an important treaty with the British minister, Sir Henry Lytton Bulwer. It was the only important achievement of this brief administration in diplomacy, and it related to Central America and to a new canal which it was now proposed to construct from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific by way of San Juan River of Nicaragua and a chain of inland lakes in that region. That treaty, familiar in following years as the "Clayton-Bulwer Treaty," because of the heated controversies to which it gave rise, was signed at Washington on the 19th of April, and sent to the Senate for approval during the lull which followed the selection of Clay's compromise committee. Since the acquisition of Cali-

* 1 Coleman's Crittenden, 348, etc.

† *Supra*, p. 118.

fornia and the impulse given to universal traffic by our gold discovery, the project of connecting the two great oceans of the world by a ship canal became invested with an immediate and practical importance. Nature invited such an enterprise at the narrow ligament which bound the two Americas. Polk's administration had sought arrangements with Mexico for facilitating a transit through Tehuantepec, and Mexico would not grant it. Railway and canal projects of this character engaged the attention of commercial nations in Europe as well as ourselves and of Great Britain in particular. Already was a railroad under way at the Isthmus of Panama. Nicaragua, though of broader expanse, offered some natural advantages for a transit by water courses. But connected with such a question was the more difficult one of controlling jurisdiction of the soil and protecting the enterprise. Central America was weakly governed; and the feverish passion of extending our empire to the southward — faintly connected under every phase with dreams of an independent slave confederacy — was not easily allayed.

While American dominion loomed more and more portentously over this continent, like the genie escaping from Solomon's vase, Great Britain and France, on their part, worked covertly for a counterpoise to it; ^{1847-1849.} and among the footprints of this latter receding influence was a British protectorate established on the Caribbean side of Central America over the squalid king of the Mosquito Indians and what was called the Mosquito coast. Central America consisted at this time of independent states or republics which preserved the sacred right of constantly quarrelling with one another. Polk, proclaiming to the world in 1847, as he had proclaimed before, that no European power should, with our assent, be allowed to gain any new foothold on this continent, Congress, at his request, appropriated for a mission to Guatemala, the most flourishing of these Central American States. But before Hise, Polk's chosen minister, left home, an insurrection broke out, in which the weaker party appeared disposed to transfer to our control

what they had not power to control for themselves,—a situation of which Polk desired to take advantage.*

The difficult subject went over to a Whig administration, and as Whigs were strongly suspicious that the Monroe Doctrine was used by their adversaries as a stalking horse for slavery expansion, President Taylor lost little time in compressing the subject to its practical and honest relations. Accordingly, one of his first acts was to send a special minister to Nicaragua, empowered to agree with that State to extend protection over any company which should engage in good faith to build a ship canal. Hise, in the meantime, had negotiated a treaty there, conformable to his own idea of American wishes; and the guaranties of protection which it stipulated on the part of the United States were so flagrantly unconstitutional and dangerous that Taylor, with the advice of his cabinet, suppressed it. Squier, the Whig chargé, next concluded a treaty for an inter-oceanic canal, not for our own benefit exclusively, but so that all nations might traverse it, and it bound the

1849-1850. United States to no greater interference, should local disorders arise, than a general protectorate.†

Upon the same safe basis of self-denial was framed, afterwards, the Clayton-Bulwer treaty. A private company of 1850. American capitalists, had been organized to construct a ship canal. As to any such work this treaty forbade the exclusive control by either Great Britain or the United States; but mutual assurance was given that each power would facilitate its construction and maintain the neutrality of its common use.‡ That friendly compact, confirmed by the Senate and proclaimed on our anniversary of July 4th, was hailed by the American people as just and liberal to the commerce of the world, and honorable through its forbearance. But schemes of

* 2 Curtis's James Buchanan, c. 22

† Clayton's Speech in Senate, March 1, 1853. The latter treaty, approved by President Taylor, was sent to the Senate; but it does not appear to have been acted on.

‡ 9 U. S. Stats. 995.

inter-oceanic transit at the Isthmus ripened after all very slowly; five years opened up a railway at Panama, but neither there nor at Nicaragua has a ship canal been built in forty years. And for a deeper disappointment, it soon turned out that the self-denying check upon colonizing designs, to which both countries seemed so generously to bind themselves, involved on Great Britain's part, as she understood it, no abandonment of her present protectorate. To this subject we shall recur hereafter.

A mortifying scandal of this cabinet was the Galphin claim,—a demand against our government, growing out of Georgia land reservations, and as ancient as the Revolutionary War. It happened that Crawford (who was a son of the famous Secretary of Monroe's cabinet) had been employed for years as counsel to press that claim upon the United States with the promise of a large contingent fee. Congress, in 1848, directed the Secretary of the Treasury to investigate and make whatever adjustment should be found suitable. Polk's Secretary pronounced the claim valid, and paid over the principal sum; but the question of paying intervening interest went over to his successor. Crawford took the portfolio of war under President Taylor, as he never ought to have done under such circumstances, and with no very scrupulous sense of public propriety transferred his agency for prosecuting the claim, but retained his contingent interest in it. A coterie of professional brethren in the new cabinet helped one another out, as lawyers are apt to do when contingent fees are at stake, if unaccustomed to looking at questions on their political side. The faithful comptroller rejected the claim for interest, which, right or wrong, the government had at least never been in the habit of paying, aside from some express contract. The Galphin claimants appealed to Secretary Meredith; he asked the advice of the Attorney-General; the latter prepared an opinion favorable to the claimants, whereupon Meredith reversed his subordinate's decision and ordered the interest paid. This amounted to about

\$191,000, and more than four times the principal claim already settled. A stroke from the pen of a fellow-official made Crawford a rich man, and he took his third of the prize with neither delay nor delicacy.

The transaction got abroad, as all such matters will, and the House was requested to investigate. But while Whig

^{April.} journalists assumed, as in duty bound, to make light of it, opponents were horrified, and the President, without question, was very seriously distressed. No man ever had a keener sense of official integrity than General Taylor, nor meant more earnestly to have an administration, like Cæsar's wife, above suspicion. He fully resolved to make official change, and rid himself of the counsellors who had compromised him. But he did not move as swiftly to his purpose as Jackson, perhaps, would have done, and factious enemies in the House who fought his anti-slavery policy, used the weapon to harsh advantage at their opportune moment.*

It was the 8th of May when Clay submitted to an eager Senate, as chairman, the report of his committee of thirteen.

^{May.} The scheme they had agreed upon consisted of three bills. The first rolled into one measure the three incongruous subjects of California's admission, the establishment of territorial governments for New Mexico and Utah with a dubious clause as to freedom and slavery, and the offer to Texas of a good round sum, on condition of relinquishing her claim of jurisdiction upon New Mexico and agreeing to an arbitrary boundary line. The second bill provided new and more stringent measures for recapturing fugitive slaves upon free soil. And the third abolished the slave market from the capital and District of Columbia. All this was a patchwork of separate bills which had been lying loose

* See 1 Thurlow Weed's Life, c. 59. Among the changes intended (so Thurlow Weed relates on the strength of his private interviews) was that of putting Hamilton Fish, governor of New York, into Meredith's place and sending Meredith, to whom Taylor, socially, was warmly attached, on some foreign mission.

among the Senate files for several months, each attracting its own separate set of supporters. The bill for admitting California had been reported some three months before from the Senate committee on the territories; so too had the separate bills for New Mexico and Utah, which Clay's committee now wafered together; the fugitive slave bill was that which Mason of Virginia had originally presented; and even as to the suppression of the District slave trade the claim of authorship by this solemn committee was open to dispute.* Scarcely had Clay's lengthy report been submitted with these bills, when debate showed that members of this committee were very far from harmonizing in the general plan of compromise, the majority of Southern members claiming that it gave too much to the North. But the chairman's report assumed complacently that the adoption of all these measures would settle all the sectional controversies now pending and "give general satisfaction to an overwhelming majority of the people of the United States." †

The target of dissatisfaction in this unwieldy scheme of settlement was the first bill, in which California was saddled with all the territories, and the Texas compact, besides; thus making her admission conditional upon provisions she never created and over which her people had not the slightest control. In this long and promiscuous bill of forty sections, save one, — styled presently, in derision, the "Omnibus Bill," there was nothing to which a majority of the same committee could agree; while the mixture with its various ingredients was a nauseating draught to drink, even on the supposition by no means clear that the Union needed any such medicine at all.

The weakest part of this whole plan lay in beating a retreat from the principle of the Wilmot Proviso and shuffling an option between freedom and slavery upon the inhabitants of each territory. It was abnegating the function of guardian and tutor, on the part of Congress, and leaving the ward to his own moral devices. What

* See 2 Benton's View, 750,

† Congressional Globe.

fatal consequences followed such a precedent we shall see hereafter. Clay in acceding to such a settlement, varied like a sunbeam. Webster, too, on the 7th of March, in turning his back upon the famous watchword, gave as his reason for avoiding such needless irritation to Southern gentlemen, that nature had set the Proviso already on the whole soil of the territory. He protested that it was useless to "re-enact a law of God"—as though that were not the real and legitimate aim of human statutes. Clay's first effort was quite characteristic on his part, to leave territorial exclusion of slavery under his bill as vague as possible, saving sectional honor by a juggle. Davis, of Mississippi, went straight to the marrow by demanding some explicit assertion that slaveholders should have their full rights as such in New Mexico, and that regardless of territorial legislation. This was more than the Senate would assent to, and they voted down the extension of the Missouri line besides. Among other numerous amendments rejected was explicit prohibition by the Wilmot Proviso;

^{June.} this failed by 33 to 23. At length Soulè, of Louisiana, the most courteous senator, perhaps, on slavery's side, proposed to amend the pending bill so as to read that each territory should be admitted as a State "with or without slavery" as its constitution might prescribe at the time of admission. This was the germ of "popular sovereignty" (so called in after years),—of cowardly renunciation by Congress of its national duties. Webster sustained that phrase, little dreaming what would come of the precedent; his sanction carried the amendment, and the status of slavery for Utah and New Mexico was fixed for compromise.*

Stripped of all considerate verbiage, the vital issue, and that on which wavering disunionists from the South based their demands, was the chance to recover the lost equilibrium by bringing more slave States into the Union. Soulè's amendment in the Senate presented squarely the same question which slaveholders pressed about the

* Congressional Globe, *passim*.

same time in the House. With them the turning-point, after it became evident that the Missouri line would not be extended, was to bring Congress to the principle of non-interference in the territories. Soule's amendment put that principle into the compromise. Both Stephens and Toombs, who acted together, found out, to their great consternation, that President Taylor would veto no territorial bill which might pass Congress with the Wilmot Proviso attached.* Yet, after all, no bill with such a rider was likely to pass at this time at all. Taylor's plan, we have seen, aimed to save the new territories from defilement, independently of that Congressional assertion upon which the South was by this time extremely sensitive. The Senate refused to express the Wilmot Proviso, as shown already. Much earlier, and by February 4th, the House had laid upon the table ^{February.} resolutions introduced by Root, an Ohio agitator, for instructing the committee on territories to report that obnoxious restriction. Ashmun Winthrop, and other conservative Northern Whigs, who stayed away when the vote was taken, were berated as "skulkers," and Root is said to have declared that he would have the ex-Speaker's vote or his scalp. These reluctant Whigs had reason for their course. They believed Root's resolution premature and precipitate, mischievous in design, and designed, as Winthrop expressed it, "for the sake of playing captain and marching ahead of the music." † Indeed, the sagacious President had planned to dispense with that assertion; for, to tell the truth, many a fastidious Northern Whig, who supported Taylor, was almost ready to declare, with Webster, that the shibboleth labelled by the name of an independent Democrat was no shibboleth for him.

The elements of opposition to Clay's compromise plan, though strongly divergent, threatened to destroy it. And its illustrious inventor found that the Whig President with his cabinet were opposed to it. Taylor brought no

* Johnston's Stephens, c. 24; 1 Coleman's Crittenden.

† See 1 Winthrop's Speeches, 635.

unusual pressure to bear on behalf of his declared policy, but he adhered firmly to it. His chief counsellors did not believe that its adoption would endanger the Union; on the contrary they felt that the greatest menace both to the President and the country, lay in coupling with the California bill these totally distinct measures.* The mettle of the old warrior was rising; he stood firm as adamant against all threateners of disunion. There was danger of a breach between himself and Clay; and the latter, who had taken the fullest advantage of Taylor's modest demeanor when the session opened, and his repeated pledges not to set himself against the will of the legislature, showed plain chagrin that the Executive would not yield to him. In a speech by no means respectful, he objected to the President's policy that it stopped short of what the national situation required. Five "bleeding wounds" he counted off rhetorically on the fingers of his left hand. "Does the President heal these all?" asked the orator. "No; he heals only one of the five, and, by admitting California, leaves the other four to bleed profusely." To which Benton replied sarcastically that if Clay had had more fingers he would have counted more wounds.†

As between Clay and the President it was in truth the old story of Mahomet and the mountain. But to do the great orator justice, his old imperious tone was subdued and in these last pacific efforts he was forbearing as never before.

President Taylor seemed likely to command the field. The loyal people preferred his plan, and the most influential Whig presses sustained it. An event

^{June.} happened in June which disheartened the disunionists. A convention of delegates from the slaveholding States met in Nashville on the 3rd of that month pursuant to a call, Judge Sharkey of Mississippi presiding. Ultra slaveholders had hoped that this body would present to the country the solemn alternative of secession

* Cf. Johnston's Life of Stephens, and 1 Coleman's Crittenden.

† 2 Schurz's Clay, 353; 2 Benton's View, 749.

or compliance with their extreme demands. But the bones of Jackson and Calhoun mouldered in graves hundreds of miles apart; no new leader of the disunion party had yet arisen; the attendance was unexpectedly thin, and instead of fierce thunderbolts were subdued mutterings. A political movement much dreaded while Calhoun was alive collapsed in ridicule. Southern tyros in treason sought refuge in Clay's "rickety ark" of compromise; but the more that tendency was perceptible on one side, the more closely, on the other, did loyalty lean to the side of the President. The House struggled through obstruction to pass a bill for the simple admission of California as a free State, and it took the best brains of slaveholding tacticians to stave off a vote so that the Senate might have precedence.

The real seat of danger was New Mexico, where the people were already in motion to form a free State constitution and apply for admission as California had done. Southern ultras as a last resort urged Texas to take the bold leap and secure her prey, pledging themselves to sustain her pretensions at all hazards. They hoped thus to wrest New Mexico from freedom's arms, or, if opposed, plunge the Union in civil war. That movement was rash and premature, and the President met it without flinching. He had no thought of settling the boundary question arbitrarily; at the same time he considered it a question not between Texas and New Mexico, while the latter remained a territory, but between Texas and the United States, the guardian and owner of that territory. In that sense he meant to protect the boundary line which Mexico had defined by the treaty of Guadalupé-Hidalgo until by the intervention of Congress or a suit in the federal courts the dispute was definitely settled. The war which brought us New Mexico cost the Union millions upon millions of dollars and many thousand lives; it cost Texas, as such, nothing; and the cession from the parent republic by dint of conquest made no mention whatever of Texas as an interested claimant. New Mexico, indeed,

was an ancient province of the Spanish dominion, having its own homogeneous population, though a small one; nor had Texas ever invaded that Sante Fé region without being repulsed.

In November, 1849, Taylor, through his Secretary of War, instructed Colonel Monroe, our military commandant there,

1849. to aid the inhabitants of New Mexico to form a

State government. As to the disputed boundary, he superseded his predecessor's orders, so far as to direct the existing status to be maintained until Congress could dispose of the subject. Texas played a bold hand, as the only one that could win the stakes. A Texan militia force

1850. penetrated New Mexico by the El Paso route and

March. summoned Colonel Monroe to aid in establishing Texan jurisdiction over the region. Monroe declined, but March. proclaimed neutrality upon the boundary dispute.

The inhabitants next bestirred themselves after the example of the Californians, though on a much smaller scale. Monroe, as military governor, acted as

April. General Riley had done, and in April called a convention of delegates to form a State constitution.

By peaceful process a suit in our Supreme Court might have settled the Texan claim of boundaries.* Recourse to compact, on the other hand, was a feature of Clay's scheme for log-rolling the moralities; nor was that, perhaps, an unfair solution of the Texan difficulty, had Clay but placed it apart upon its separate pedestal of merit. For all that Texas blustered so, she feared the President, and her disloyal contumacy could be bought off. It was the license Congress had given Texas in 1845 to form new slave States from her jurisdiction,† which led rebellious slaveholders to plunge that jurisdiction into new directions. The threats grew louder and more insolent when New Mexico was seen organizing her own people on freedom's side and sinking the old federal equilibrium to a deeper perdition. Taylor maintained official reserve, but he welcomed none the less those popular omens. The

* See U. S. Constitution, art. iii. § 2.

† See vol. iv p. 487.

same menaces which drove our chief civilians to truckling stirred him to put rebellion down. He disliked the whole compromise of iniquities, wished California's admission granted upon its own merits, and the integrity of the Union maintained at every hazard. "I would rather," he said impetuously to Webster, "have California wait, than bring in all the territories on her back."*

Fellow-slaveholders from the Gulf States, men who thought it sacred honor to band their interests together, tried to drive the President from this attitude. At a secret meeting held by the Southern Whigs of Congress, a committee was appointed to remonstrate with him, threatening, if need be, their opposition.† This June. was about the last of June. The delegates found him stubborn, and their interview at the White House was a stormy one. Would he pledge himself to sign no bill with the Wilmot Proviso in it? The old warrior replied that he would sign any constitutional bill that Congress presented him. Next they threatened to break up the Union. "Southern officers," added one of them "will refuse to obey your orders if you send troops to coerce Texas." "Then," responded Taylor, in high excitement, "I will command the army in person; and any man who is taken in treason against the Union I will hang as I did the deserters and spies at Monterey."‡ The committee withdrew crestfallen; for they knew the general was inflexible to obstinacy where, as in the present case, he believed himself right.§ "What are you

* 2 Curtis's Webster, 473

† 2 Claiborne's Life of Quitman, 32, 33.

‡ See 2 Weed's Memoirs, c. 13, who states that he went to the White House just as these Southern Whigs—Toombs, Stephens, and Clingman—came out, and that he found the President pacing the room greatly agitated, and was informed by him of the conversation which had just taken place. See also conversation with Hon. F. W. Seward (1890). Stephens, in 1876, denied through the press that there had been any such interview, but Senator Hamlin and General Pleasanton corroborate Weed's statement. See also Claiborne's Quitman, *supra*.

§ 2 Claiborne's Quitman, 33 There may have been other Southern interviews, for accounts differ on minor points.

doing with that ‘Omnibus Bill’?” asked the President of Hannibal Hamlin, a Democratic senator from Maine, who entered the room as they passed out. “I believe the bill wrong in principle, Mr. President,” was Hamlin’s reply, “and I am trying to do what I can to defeat it.” “Stand firm,” said the President; “don’t yield; it means disunion, and I am pained to learn that we have disunion men to deal with; disunion is treason.” And with a blunt expletive which gave emphasis to his feelings, he added that he would treat traitors as they deserved.*

A military force had actually organized in Texas to invade New Mexico and annex that territory by violence. To counteract the design, Taylor ordered Colonel Monroe to be reinforced, and directed that any attempt from Texas to exercise armed jurisdiction should be repelled.† Crawford, the Secretary of War, whose leaning favored Stephens and Toombs, his personal friends, was appalled when directed to issue such an order and said he could not sign it. “Then,” said Taylor, firmly, “I will sign the order myself.”‡

The worst of civil collision and bloodshed is, that the spirit of accommodation may be put to flight. And yet the danger at Santa Fé, the loss which the Union might apprehend in ultimate results, was most likely exaggerated by the great senators who so loftily measured their intellects against Taylor’s downright common sense. Indeed, when we consider the terrible conflict which it cost, years later, to vindicate against such imperious slaveholders the supremacy of the Union, the historian cannot but confess a tingling wish that, on any further provocation from Texas, our conqueror of Buena Vista had taken the field and thrashed her and her traitorous allies as they deserved. But while discipline would have been salutary, such extremities were not likely to have resulted from an attitude of national self-respect in this frontier dispute.

* 2 Weed, c. 13.

† Ib., statement of General Pleasanton.

‡ 2 Claiborne’s Quitman, 33.

The aggressors would have had the greater share of the difficulty; Texas would have failed against Santa Fé as she had failed before. All that our regulars had to do was to stand on the defensive and uphold New Mexico in her autonomy and the will of her inhabitants, until Congress acted.

Here of a sudden the dark curtain drops as the situation nears a climax. The hot July sun saw Congress still in angry vaporizing over the new legacy of territories, and the public business was retarded. In ^{July.} the Senate the sweating task was the Omnibus bill; in the House the untrammeled admission of California. A peremptory letter reached the President from the governor of Texas asking to be informed whether the resistant attitude of New Mexico had his sanction. Almost simultaneously came tidings unofficial of Monroe's proclamation and the convention which was about to form a State. Cass, in the Senate, always ready to turn a popular penny with the South, ranted about military usurpation and proposed to cut the New Mexican policy short. In the House the President's enemies brought up the Galphin claim. Each subject was used to weaken the President in his course by imputing personal disonor. Both Houses adjourned over the 4th, on which day the President and his suite attended a patriotic celebration on the ground where the national monument was begun. Taylor never again appeared in public. Imprudent exposure to the hot sun, followed by imprudent diet, brought on toward night an attack of cholera morbus. Medical aid was not summoned as promptly as it should have been, and a life most needful to the people hung the next day by a thread.

A messenger now arrived at the White House with the constitution which New Mexico had adopted in convention on the 25th of May, setting the boundaries of that territory as a new State and of course excluding slavery. Taylor was ill in bed; but a special cabinet meeting was held by night at Clayton's house, ^{July 7.}

in which the majority agreed to stand by the new State and the wishes of its inhabitants at all hazards. That was the President's own desire, and a stirring message to Congress would have followed. A reconstruction of the cabinet was now quite necessary, for Crawford's dissent was plainly manifested. The Galphin claim, moreover, supplied its special reasons. Worry and new responsibilities aggravated the President's symptoms which turned soon into a fever. Even in his sick chamber the old warrior had been warned by Southern extremists that unless he took sides with slave interests they would vote to censure him. They could not carry their

^{July 8.} point. On the 8th the House, adopting the resolution of an investigating committee on the Galphin claim, censured the Secretary of the Treasury, and reflected severely upon Crawford; a proposal to cen-

^{July 9.} sure the President failed. It was known the next afternoon that the President was dangerously ill, and both Houses adjourned in consequence. Taylor died that same evening. His last words murmured a defence of motives which had been outraged while he lay struggling for life; "I have endeavored," he said, "to do my duty."

Even those who had lent a hand in the torture felt sympathy and respect for the brave old man who had died on the rack of official responsibility. No one could now deny

^{July 13.} the purity of his intentions. A second Whig funeral went sadly forth from the White House. Clay, Cass, Webster and Benton were together among the pall bearers. The slow and solemn procession down Pennsylvania avenue revived the associations of Taylor's military fame. Plumes waved of various colors; white, red, blue, and green marked the alternating costumes of military companies which filed with reversed arms to the brass music of the dirge. Chief among the mounted army officers towered the superb figure of General Scott, who lent his reconciling presence to these last obsequies. Duncan's light artillery was in line, which, as tradition claimed, fired the first cannon and the last in the battles

of the Mexican War. And behind the sumptuous funeral car was led "old Whitey," the war horse of the dead President, richly caparisoned, but with saddle empty and never to be filled again. Other pageants, which imitated this real one, expressed the people's grief in all the chief cities of the Union.

Zachary Taylor was the first of American Presidents whose choice rested solely upon a military reputation disconnected altogether from civil pursuits. And the only errors of his administration,—which, after all, were unimportant,—should be ascribed to his inexperience in public affairs and his unacquaintance with public men; time would have corrected them had he lived to round out his term. His cabinet was not all it should have been, and while he was on the point of changing it death intervened, and the regret remains that he had not changed it before. In the higher aims of domestic, as well as foreign policy, he showed the best qualities of an administrator; being wise, temperate, sincere, honest as the day, more than loyal to the Union, because he loved it and would have laid down his life in its defence. He was simple in habits, frank in manners, with a genuineness which impressed all who came in contact with him, and a firmness that shunned no danger. Though not by genius or habit a statesman, he saw more clearly the bold headlands of national policy through the mists that were gathering, than the wisest and world-renowned of our statesmen who scarcely condescended to him and thought their vision better. Nor did it take him many months to discern that what the country wished and needed was not pacification nor the plausible bargain of principles, but loyal acquiescence in nature and the right. A slaveholder himself, he yet felt that slavery ought not to extend farther. A soldier of the Union, he stood ready to lead the Union forces in his own person if his own section rebelled, and to pour out his blood in defence of the flag.

Personal example is, after all, the greatest force which

can elevate or degrade a government; and the best of personal examples is that of honest patriotism striving to be right. Taylor, while he lived, inspired firmness for freedom's cause, and he was the one man before whom the false idealists of a slave confederacy quailed with fear. Naturally, then, he endeared himself to the common people, and had he lived there is little doubt that he would have carried the policy he had at heart. It was the most practical; it depended the least upon assertion by Congress. But the key of the territorial situation was lost with the warrior who grasped it. The saying had long been current, "General Taylor never surrenders;" and his first surrender was to death. His last appearance in life was fitly on the anniversary of his country's independence. His last official act was to proclaim the new compact with great Britain. That grim conqueror, who had never checked his military renown, forbade him the proof of statesmanship, and his monument must remain an unfinished shaft.

CHAPTER XX.

ADMINISTRATION OF MILLARD FILLMORE.

SECTION I.

PERIOD OF THIRTY-FIRST CONGRESS.

JULY 9, 1850—MARCH 3, 1851.

ROLL back the inevitable tide for ten years and we may estimate the effect of Taylor's untimely death upon American politics. The man was gone on whom freedom's cause depended; there was no leader of the people left but Congress, and Congress was not likely to resist long its orators. And now for a space the marble-propped chamber vibrates with funeral eloquence,—with silvery eulogies, breathing all kindness, as the virtues of the dead are recounted, yet all the while hinting delicately that the orator himself would have made the better President for times so turbulent. "There were circumstances in his death," said Webster, mysteriously, in deep and solemn tones, "so favorable for his own fame and character, so gratifying to all to whom he was most dear, that he may be said to have died fortunately." Clay, later, paid his tribute to the departed as "an honest man and a brave man;" but while praising him for his conduct of foreign affairs, he spoke with reserve upon his domestic administration.

Both Webster and Clay deemed Taylor's death opportune for the welfare of the Union. The former, indeed, pallid and nervous, expressed with private pen quite freely his belief that the country had providentially escaped the horrors of civil war.* Leading thus gently the public mind from a dead President, so fortunate and

* 2 *Curtis's Webster*, 473.

happy, yet afflicted, as they considered it, with an obstinacy as perverse as it was patriotic, they cleared the path for humble concession to the traitorous. Even Taylor's military reputation began to pale as the patronizing renown of Winfield Scott, whom Taylor had disliked, rose higher.*

A second time had the Whigs chosen a President, to be baffled by the all-destroyer. But no apostate succession was to be their present misfortune. Millard Fillmore was a genuine Whig as well as a wise, upright, and incorruptible statesman. His experience with public affairs, and his knowledge of public men, were far more extensive than Taylor had brought to the chief magistracy. He loved the Union and was devoted to its welfare. And besides all this, his inner convictions were anti-slavery; he had been nursed and brought up in that quarter of an agitating State where agitation rocked hardest. For all this, Fillmore's training, his temperament, was that of a civilian, not bold, but prudent. His disposition was conservative; he could not create; he was one who at all times would rather make terms than face an enemy. And more than this he appreciated the immense difference in popular strength between an elected President and an accidental one,—between an Executive who could face slaveholders as one of their own class, and an Executive against whom slavery would fork its tongue as an intruder. Men who dared not more than to threaten the one, would have opposed, perhaps impeached, thwarted in every way, the other. Fillmore, then, was easily swayed by Webster, Clay, and all the temporizing influences of the Whig party. Nor should we fail to recall Fillmore's long strife with Seward for predominance in their common State and neighborhood. With his lurking jealousy of the rival who had diverted a share of local patronage and outstripped him so quickly in favor at the White House, there is little doubt that during the splendid debate to

* See 2 Scott's Memoirs.

which he was a silent listener, the man who presided over the Senate had been drifting, almost unconsciously, into the current of time-serving truce. So true is it that under our system the Vice-President inclines to become an attractor of counter-influences within the party.

It did not take Seward long to discover that his services as privy-counsellor were at an end. His first interview with the promoted President found the latter embarrassed, perplexed, unconfiding. To his advice that all the old cabinet should be retained, or those, rather, like Clayton, Ewing, and Collamer, whose standing was uninjured, and who wished to stay, Fillmore gave no favorable sign. Clay's advice, in fact, soon shaped the new council board.*

Unlike the precedent of Harrison's death, this instance was the first in which the Presidential office happened to devolve while Congress or even the Senate was in session. On the day, therefore, after Taylor died, Millard Fillmore qualified in the Representatives' hall, ^{July 10.} in presence of the members of both branches; Judge Cranch of the circuit court administering the oath of office at the clerk's desk. The Senate and high officers of State then retired; and later in the day a message of condolence from the new President, which was read in both Houses, served to preface the brief and touching eulogies pronounced upon Fillmore's predecessor.

Following the example set in 1841, all the members of the Whig cabinet now tendered their resignations to the new President; at whose request, however, they remained long enough for him to make up his own administration. This took less than a week, and Fillmore's list was at once confirmed by the Senate, which had, in the meantime, chosen William R. King, of Alabama, its president *pro tem.* The list comprised Daniel Webster, ^{July 15.} of Massachusetts, Secretary of State; Thomas Corwin, of Ohio, Secretary of the Treasury; James A. Pearce, of Maryland, Secretary of the Interior; Edward

* Seward MSS.

Bates, of Missouri, Secretary of War; William A. Graham, of North Carolina, Secretary of the Navy; John J. Crittenden, of Kentucky, Attorney-General; and Nathan K. Hall, of New York, Postmaster-General. Of these Webster, Corwin, Graham, Crittenden, and Hall, accepted office and promptly qualified. Pearce and Bates declined; the one preferring his present place in the Senate, and the other the independence of private station. To the Interior Department Thomas M. T. McKennan, of Pennsylvania, once a member of the House, was next appointed, but resigned very speedily from feeble health, Alexander H. H. Stuart, of September. Virginia, one of Clay's devoted friends, succeeding him. The War Department was filled about the middle of August by Charles M. Conrad, of Louisiana, a Whig representative.

Not one of the counsellors of the late President was retained in the service. These shifted for themselves as best they might. Ewing was fortunate enough to secure at once the seat which Corwin vacated in the Senate. Clayton for the third time joined that familiar body in less than a year, and was senator for the rest of his life. Collamer was not in national politics again for many years, but Vermont gave him a seat in the State judiciary. Meredith and Reverdy Johnson found consolation in the briefs and retainers of clients, more lucrative than ever. Meredith was blotted out from public life; and as for Crawford and Preston, they dropped into permanent obscurity. The late Secretary of War invited Congress to make good its censure by instituting a suit to recover what had been paid him on the Galphin claim; but that was never done.

Fillmore's cabinet was most probably the dictation of Clay. Able and illustrious advisers were these, less incongruous as a whole than those they supplanted. Taylor had been much stronger than his own cabinet; but these men, if not stronger than their President, encircled him at least with a solid wall. It was a Union-loving and a Union-saving administration; fully committed by

No.
of
Webster
See
Meriw

this time to that conservative emblem of a great republic which presented freedom and slavery as inseparably bound up together, like the axe and rods of the Roman lictors. Crittenden himself, though loyal to his new hero while the latter lived, and constant in urging his disgusted Southern friends to "stand by old Zach," had those Southern instincts which taught him, like Clay, to pacify with the idea of gaining something for his section.* The dominating spirit of the new cabinet, of course, was Webster, and Webster by this time was the Ajax Telamon of Northern compromisers. Whether conscious or unconscious of a terrible mistake, he had ere this committed himself fully to the substance of Clay's pending measures. He was in deadly earnest to crush out what he considered the rebellious spirit of Free Soilers. "Abolitionism," he had derided again and again in his latest speeches in the Senate, making no clear effort to distinguish loyal and legitimate opposition to slave expansion, as he should have done. It was a fatal poison to instil into Southern minds, that all anti-slavery sentiment was of the incendiary kind that the Garrisonians openly avowed in their dangerous and disloyal speeches. Webster had followed up his reproof of Massachusetts upon the fugitive slave issue by a letter to Newburyport citizens which argued that there was nothing in the Constitution of the United States requiring a jury to pass upon the identity of a captured negro.† He insisted, against Seward and others, upon the perpetual obligation Congress was under to admit such new slave States as might be carved out of Texas. He cast aside all Northern and free State prepossessions. "I mean to stand upon the Constitution," he said, on the Senate floor just before entering the new cabinet. "I need no other platform; I shall know but one country. The ends I aim at shall be my country's, my God's, and truth's. I was born an American, I shall die an American; and I intend to

* 1 Coleman's Crittenden, 369.

† Horace Mann, in the press, joined issue with Webster on this point.

July.

perform the duties incumbent upon me in that character to the end of my career." "No man," he added, with a martyr's emphasis, "can suffer too much, and no man can fall too soon, if he suffer or if he fall in defence of the liberties and constitution of his country."* Those were the last words ever spoken in Congress by the most splendid of all its orators.

The composition of this new Whig cabinet pointed the essential adoption of Clay's conciliatory policy, after so

many months of absorbing discussion. A del-
^{July.} egate chosen from New Mexico asked admission to the floor, but the House refused its assent; and a delegate from "Deseret" was in like manner excluded. Winthrop left the House for the Senate chamber, appointed to fill the seat which Webster had vacated. The House still dallied with its California bill, waiting, with uncertainty, for the Senate to take the lead. But though compromise was surely in the air, the Senate felt something of the stubborn Buena Vista spirit when the time for action came; and Clay's "Omnibus," with its huddling and humiliating load of uncongenial projects, was first of all upset. Amendment after amendment hav-

ing been adopted, the disfigured bill was on
^{July 31.} the last day of July stripped rudely of the sections relating to California and New Mexico; and then passed by 32 to 18 as a naked bill to provide a

^{August 1.} territorial government for Utah, and nothing more. On the very next day the bill, which had been so long laid aside, for the admission of California, was made the special order of the Senate by a large majority.†

Clay felt very keenly the wreck of his "Omnibus Bill," for he feared that the whole scheme of compromise had gone to pieces with it. He had hoped much from an administration working zealously on his side. "My relations with Mr. Fillmore are perfectly friendly and confidential,"

* 5 Webster's Works, 437.

† Congressional Globe.

he wrote in August.* Still Congress was skittish and recalcitrant, refusing the bridle. In his appeal to the Senate before the vote was taken, and once more on the day after the voting came out so disastrously, Clay's clarion rang its clearest notes. His health, to be sure, was feeble and failing. For six months with tottering steps, he had dragged his limbs up the stone staircase and across the rotunda, leaning on the arm of some chance friend, and then taken the floor, day after day, to bear up the cause of fraternal harmony; answering petulant objections; pleading, expostulating, ever beseeching members to lay aside their sectional differences. However doubtful the wisdom of his whole policy, no one could question his noble and patriotic purpose. His old dictatorial spirit was carefully restrained; gone was all selfish ambition. So little pride of opinion had he shown in the long debate that he had sacrificed—and weakly, too—his preferences for free territory, and made concession after concession to the defenders of slavery for the sake of coaxing them to loyalty. But with all his fervent belief that his new plan meant "the reunion of the Union," he felt conscious that he had stooped to conquer. And now flashed forth in his speech the fire of the alternative which so many of his fellow-slaveholders seemed mad enough to provoke. Some had spoken of hoisting the standard of secession; of going with their own State as country enough for them. "Even if it were my own State," responded Clay, with eyes suffused with tears; "even if my own State lawlessly, contrary to her duty, should raise the standard of disunion against the residue of the Union, I would go against her; I would go against old Kentucky, much as I love her." "If, after all that has occurred," he resumed, when the Omnibus Bill had broken down, "any one State, or the people of any State, choose to place themselves in military array against the government of the Union, I am for trying the strength of the government." And in this strain he proceeded while the galleries broke out in spontaneous

* Clay's Private Correspondence.

applause, which was checked for an instant by the officers, and then repeated.*

Clay left the stifling capital, dejected and worn out, and sought to repair his health at the seashore. But his last words left a memorable impression, and while he was absent, with no lead but that from the White House, Congress soon carried the compromise measures in separate fragments. Majorities, differently composed, could be had for each separate bill. Many were disposed to concoct a compact who stood somewhat upon points of pride; they did not wish to be taken, as it were, by the throat. The main point, then, was to bring all the crucial measures about the same time to the goal of the

August. Presidential signature. While the Senate discussed the bill for admitting California, "hangman Foote," who was now coming round to the Union side, offered an amendment that the new State should not exercise her jurisdiction over territory south of the parallel of the Missouri Compromise. This, after debate, was negatived; and so, too, were various other proposals for yielding part of the soil to slave pollution. All efforts thus failing to hinder or restrain, the bill for admitting California into the Union as a State with the boundaries and free charter of her own choice, passed the Senate on the 13th of August.† The next day a menacing protest was offered in that body against the broken equilibrium of slave and free States. It was signed by ten Southern Senators among whom were Atchison, Jefferson Davis, Soulé, and both the senators from Virginia, South Carolina and Florida. The Senate refused to receive that document and the bill went to the House.‡

Upon the Texas boundary conflict, the Senate had acted a few days before, spurred by a special message from President Fillmore § which informed Congress that the governor of Texas had convened the State legislature,

* Congressional Globe; 2 Schurz's Clay, 355-360.

† By a vote of 34 to 18. Bell, Benton, and Houston joined the free-State senators in voting for it.

‡ Congressional Globe.

§ Dated August 6th.

with the purpose, apparently, of taking summary occupation of the disputed country. Force must be repelled by force, he added, unless the general government confronts the State with friendly proposals. Upon this hint Pearce hurriedly offered a bill to aid the new policy of the cabinet which he had declined to enter. It passed the Senate quickly on the 9th of August; the vote standing 30 to 20, with Benton on the negative side. The boundary it proposed cut down New Mexico more than Clay had intended and offered Texas a round \$10,000,000 besides, to relinquish her claims upon the rest of the territory.*

Two of the great subjects conjoined in the Omnibus Bill being thus disposed of, the bill was taken up for establishing a territorial government in New Mexico. Chase's amendment was lost which proposed to apply the Wilmot Proviso, and on the 15th the bill finally passed, with the slavery option clause which Soulé had presented. The territory might be subdivided any time at the discretion of Congress, and when admitted, any State formed out of the territory should be received into the Union with or without slavery as her constitution should then prescribe. The Utah bill, that last remnant of the Omnibus, had been similarly expressed. Now came the fugitive slave bill, taken up on the 19th and passed on the 26th in a thin chamber by more than two to one. The slaveholding side, in solid phalanx, resisted such amendments as the North most wished to tack to that bill. The arrested negro was denied the benefit of a jury trial; free colored seamen, citizens from the North, imprisoned in Southern ports could have no redress.†

These "compromise bills" went one by one to the House, which had meantime moved neither backward nor forward. First in order came the bill which offered indemnity to Texas. At the prospect of millions of the United States money, as an inducement for laying aside civil

* Clay had originally intended offering that sum to Texas, but the amount was not mentioned in the Omnibus Bill for fear it would cause stock speculations. 2 Schurz's Clay, 361.

† Congressional Globe.

war, the scrip of that costly State which had risen within a few weeks from 10 per cent to 50, would, in case the bill passed, advance in the market to par. A large lobby gathered in consequence at the capitol, and Texas securities were said to be held by members of Congress and by government officials, high and low.* The struggle here was desperate; but after two successive defeats the bill ^{September.} was carried September 6th by ten majority, with the territorial bill for New Mexico tacked to it. The Senate concurring in three days, the doubled bill went to the President. This was the beginning of the end. On the 8th of September the California admission bill and the Utah territorial bill passed the House ordeal unchanged. On one and the same day, the 9th, President Fillmore approved these three bills, and the Omnibus was recreated.† The fugitive slave bill went through the House in blushing and uneasy acquiescence. Fillmore's hand, on the 18th, was set to that measure also,‡ and signed his death warrant as a statesman. The slaughter of the shambles was completed, and Congress emerged into the light of day. All of the programme was now carried out which Clay's resolutions had proposed seven months and more ago,— all but the reciprocal grace to anti-slavery sentiment which interdicted the slave trade in this District, before the eyes and nostrils of national legislators. So far from approaching the abolition of slavery at the capital by such a concession, the Senate could muster but five votes in favor of buying at a good price the freedom of these slaves, whose aristocratic masters would let them out to work, like stablekeepers, and pocket their wages. Southern extremists would not have conceded Clay's little; but the orator, once more in his seat, carried the point by his eloquent rhetoric, besides magnifying it to much. A bill which deigned to suppress all slave trade in the District, so as to spare Northern compunctions, passed both Houses and became a law ten

* 2 Schurz's Clay, 363.

† U. S. Stats. at Large, cs. 49-51.

‡ Ib. c. 60.

days before Congress adjourned,* lagging in the rear of those other compromise measures which the President's pen had approved already.

Congress adjourned on the 30th of September, after one of the longest and most contentious sessions on record. It was a session of compromise and little else ; of death, official succession, and reversed policies, which bore up or bore down the divided feelings of a legislature. Nothing important up to Taylor's death had passed, but the census act ; nothing important was laid before his successor for approval but the measures which made up this new sectional compact.

Clay, whose public labors now shaped toward a tranquil close, carried home for the recess a deep conviction that he had accomplished a great and lasting work for the reconciliation of his beloved Union. And never had his surpassing skill as pacifier been put forth with success so signal, or when passions surged so heavily. He had pacified as a Southern man ; but upon Northern citizens now rested the chief burden of carrying the plan into practical execution. The responsible weight of fulfilling the bargain, with its thankless components, fell upon a fortuitous administration, and, in particular, upon those two men of anti-slavery antecedents, President Fillmore and Daniel Webster. The one had the odium of executing, the other of defending a league which, in imagination only, was a final and irrevocable compact. Webster, with his grand gifts of thought and oratory, had henceforth to harness down his intellect to crushing out the moral resistance in his State and section that he had once heartily shared. The plea for the new conservative reaction, which for the rest of his life he had to sustain, was the safety of the Union ; its folly, nevertheless, in supposing that modern civilization could overspread this vast continent and yet remain pent up, not so much by

* U. S. Stats. at Large, c. 63; Sept 20, 1850.

a constitution immutable, as by that lesser and weaker barrier of statutes immutable.

First in order was to buy off Texas from despoiling our possessions in New Mexico. Governor Bell's overbearing, threatening letter to President Taylor was unanswered at the latter's death. The new President hastened to coun-

^{August.} termand all military orders of his predecessor, while Webster, in a politic strain, softened down to humility, assured the governor that the Executive dis-avowed all purpose to interfere while the compromise measures were pending in Congress. Quitman, the governor of Mississippi, had pledged himself to join Texas in any emergency of arms. "Hold out in claiming New Mexico," was the purport of his advice while Pearce's bill occupied Congress. "I regard it as worse than Fillmore's bayonets, because it is no better than a bribe."

At this juncture, the governors of Mississippi and South Carolina were concerting measures for summoning a new convention of the slave States which should pro-

^{September.} claim secession. Mississippi was to be put for-ward, with Georgia, if possible, to aid her, while South Carolina, whose rebellious leadership might preju-dice the cause, was to bring up the rear. There was no remedy, they agreed, but secession; the slaveholding States already occupied a position of "degradation and inequality."*

Quitman accordingly convened the Mis-sissippi legislature in extra session to consider ^{November.} the subject, and in a fiery message proclaimed that unless Congress halved California for the benefit of slavery and gave new guarantees, "prompt and peaceable secession" should be the recourse. The legislature re-fused, however, to hasten conclusions beyond calling a convention of the people to meet some ten months hence.

^{December.} Governor Seabrook, in December, met the Pal-metto legislature with a message in Quitman's vein, — muskets, rifles, foundries, and brass field-pieces,

* 2 Claiborne's Quitman, 36 *et seq.*

made the swelling theme. The time, he says, has arrived "to resume the exercise of the powers of self-protection which, in the hour of unsuspecting confidence, we surrendered to foreign hands." But here once more the legislature hesitated, and, pending action, Seabrook's term of office expired.*

Other Southern Executives were loud-mouthed, and quite a strong current was visible which tended to disunion. "Nothing but the hope of having now settled forever all agitation of the slavery question," said Governor Floyd of Virginia, "can reconcile the South to the compromise measures; should this hope fail, the South must unite for self-preservation." It was the failure to unite, in fact, which, more than anything else, caused the present panic movement to subside. South Carolina honored the shade of her departed Calhoun; a statue ordered from Powers, our American sculptor, suffered shipwreck on its way from Italy, was rescued and then set up. In the town of Greenville a public meeting was held at which Memminger, a rising politician, urged a confederacy of the Southern States; "and if this cannot be had," he added, excitedly, "then let South Carolina secede and stand on her own rights, trusting the issue to Almighty God." His audience applauded to the echo, and so did the Palmetto press, but the cooler sentiment of the South pronounced co-operation indispensable. And it soon appeared that co-operation under present conditions was impossible. Louisiana, Alabama, and Florida, among the Gulf States, took no precipitate step; the border States remained strongly loyal; and even Georgia, whose State convention in December gave the resistants some hope, soon back recoiled. In that keystone State of the pro-slavery arch, Howell Cobb, Toombs, and Stephens, all fully won over by Harry Clay, led the Unionists presently to victory; not, however, upon the issue of unconditional, but of conditional loyalty. If the North would adhere to the terms of the new compact, execute

December.

* 2 Claiborne's Quitman, 36 *et seq.*

faithfully the fugitive slave law, and put down agitation, the South would continue to live with it fraternally. Such, too, was the equivocal expression in most other cotton States; and the evil presage of this national compromise of 1850 was in spreading the vaunt that the slave section had shown generosity in not taking up arms, as it might lawfully have done.

A new Nashville convention which adjourned in November put forth the dogmatic assumption that any State had the right to secede. Clay, a few days earlier, had November visited the legislature of Kentucky, upon its invitation, to expound and glorify the new plan of concord which Congress had adopted. "When," asked one of his auditors, "would you consent to a dissolution of the Union?" "Never!" was Clay's response; "for no possible contingency can I perceive which would make disunion desirable. I will yield, if Congress ever usurps the power to abolish slavery in the States where it exists; but I am sure it will never do so." Clay's ultimatum was a safe one, and liberal certainly for a slaveholder; but few men of younger ambition in this Southern section would have replied as he did.

For the present, at least, secession's guns were spiked. Texas, by her legislative action on the price which Congress now offered for quiet possession of the New Mexican territory, completed the dismay of that disunion spirit, which Clayton, of the late cabinet, pledged himself in a public speech at home, could never have gained headway had President Taylor's wise and sagacious policy been carried out. The legislature of the Lone Star November State met at Austin, November 18th, and within a single week a bill for accepting the new settlement of boundary passed both branches with scarcely a dissentient vote and received the governor's approval.*

The North had humiliations and struggles of its own with reference to this new immutable compact. Nor took

* 9 U. S. Stats. at Large, 1005.

it long to discern that the new fugitive slave act, which Southern Unionists seemed to think the golden link of loyalty, was, from the opposite standpoint the most damnable in the chain. It was not, perhaps, the weakest; for that, in more remote consequences, was the new principle now grafted upon the territories, whereby Congress, not content to omit quietly the Wilmot Proviso, expressly abnegated its rights of guardianship and left freedom and slavery to antagonize to the end. The mischief of that new principle was not apparent for years, but that of the fugitive slave act was palpable at once. Clay warned his Kentucky friends, and sensibly enough, that under this new act the South would not get back all its fugitives, but that with disunion it would recover not one. Drafted by a haughty Virginian, this new act was made revolting in the last degree to free State pride and then pronounced unchangeable. It put the whole slave-catching machinery under the active charge of Federal marshals and Federal commissioners, clothing the latter with absolute judicial functions over the liberty of human beings. The process to be invoked was secret and summary; there could be no jury trial upon the question of identity; the defendant's own testimony was not admissible against the claimant of ownership; and any person hindering the arrest, attempting to rescue, aiding to escape, or even harboring the supposed fugitive, was liable to fine and imprisonment. Good citizens were "commanded" to lend their aid, and the marshal was liable for the full value of a slave who escaped from his custody.* If the older act of 1793 shrunk under the meridian light of the nineteenth century, this new one, which replaced it, was, to minds not habituated to slave institutions, like stepping backwards to Draconism. The whole process, the whole offensive invasion of free States by the slave hunters, in brutal defiance of local authorities and local jurisdiction, and to the imminent risk of kidnapping free colored citizens under one pretext or another and enslaving them, touched

* Act Sept. 18, 1850, c. 60.

Northern sentiment on that most sensitive point in both sections — State pride ; perhaps no more confiding process could have compassed the ends which slaveholders had in view, but for all that it was inhuman, and scarcely within the full shelter of the Federal constitution.

Hardly, indeed, had this new law been promulgated for consigning free soil to a human hunting-ground before

1850. exciting meetings were held in northern centres September- to protest against it. Over one of the more December.

moderate gatherings in Boston, presided the venerable Josiah Quincy. Colored fugitives in the free States who had been training to become good citizens fled in fright across the borders to Canada. And while slave masters bestirred themselves to clink the fetters where compact gave them a solemn right to do so, the citizens of free States showed a sullen and refractory disposition. The first arrest of the kind appears to have been made in New York city, where a negro who had lived there two years was torn from his family and taken back to Baltimore. He was seized and carried off too quickly for forcible opposition ; but a popular subscription purchased the poor fellow's freedom, and he returned rejoicing. In Detroit the same happy sequel followed a riot so violent, when the Marshal put process in force, that a detachment

1851 of regulars had to assist. Boston, the hot-bed February 15 of abolitionism, felt the screws applied in mid-winter ; but the result turned out differently. One of the negro community of that city, a man known as Shadrach, was seized in vindication of the law ; but while he was at the court-house in custody of a deputy-marshal, after the commissioner had adjourned the hearing, a crowd composed chiefly of negroes, which had blocked the staircase and entrances, broke into the room and rescued the prisoner by force. Pursuit was not nimble, and Shadrach, with the sympathy of the people to aid his escape, reached safely the Canadian border.* Congress being by this time in session once more, President Fillmore, besides issu-

* See 1 Adams's R. H. Dana, 182.

ing a proclamation which declared that the laws must be obeyed, laid the facts before the two houses in a special message, which expressed unfeigned regret for the mishap. Many arrests were made in Boston of persons charged with participating in the rescue, and the Secretary of State had those cases prosecuted with great rigor; but little could be made of them.*

It is but just to our slaveholding brethren to admit that they seldom, if ever, invoked the machinery of this obnoxious law for fraudulent enslavement. Collision came rather at the point where free soil would have shielded the long resident as a free citizen, despite some claim of former bondage. The fugitive slave act to all but slave States was detestable, and it forced the general government to use a giant's strength like a giant. The task of quenching agitation on the slavery question was formidable enough for any administration; but to quench it while pouring oil on the flames was a task herculean. Yet Fillmore and his cabinet did not shrink from it. In the division of Northern Whigs which now ensued, radicals found themselves coalescing more closely. Large public meetings called in favor of Union, and the "peace measures," at Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Nashville, Cincinnati, and elsewhere, widened the breach irrevocably. Notable citizens took the lead in reconciling the North to the new compact,—men like Rufus Choate, John Sergeant, and Richard Rush. Old line Whigs and Democrats for the time approached one another; conservatives joined hands to put down the radicals. Letters from Webster, Clay, Cass, and Woodbury, were read promiscuously at such gatherings; and men of historical lineage were sought out to preside, from Bunker Hill to the Hermitage. No union possible without forbearance,—this was the burden of their appeal. Crittenden, the Attorney-General, prepared an opinion that the fugitive slave act was constitutional. Webster contended strenuously that, though not perfect, nor such as he would have framed, it was a law.

* 1 Adams's R. H. Dana, 228.

of the land and ought not even to be amended. "No man," he wrote to one of these gatherings, with a fling at Seward, "is at liberty to set up, or to affect to set up, his own conscience as above the law."*

Meanwhile the fall elections had in several important States generated great bitterness. The Missouri 1850 Democracy was distracted between prepossessions for Southern rights on the one hand, and the Union on the other; and Benton, who had sturdily disobeyed the disloyal instructions of his legislature, now lost the reins of local power he had held for thirty years.

In the Whig convention of New York which met in September at Syracuse, the growing feud between the Fillmore and Seward wings came to a head; resolutions were adopted which, though loyally expressed toward the new President, approved the course which the Whig senator had taken; whereupon forty voters in the minority marched out with Francis Granger at their head and held a separate convention at Utica. Granger, who on entering Harrison's cabinet was reputed radical on the anti-slavery as well as the anti-masonry cause, became one of Webster's worshippers; for years he had been tending to the conservative tack,† and henceforth he was numbered with the "silver grays,"—the name now given to Whigs of the Fillmore stripe. These Whig seceders nominated at Utica the same State ticket as at Syracuse, with Washington Hunt for governor. A union meeting at Castle Garden nominated, still later, a fusion ticket headed by Horatio Seymour, who was the Democratic candidate. Hunt, who strove for Whig harmony, was chosen by a narrow margin; the legislature continued Whig; but that breach in the party ranks was never again closed.

The New Jersey election went Democratic. Pennsylvania and Ohio each chose a Democratic governor. And in Massachusetts a coalition of Democrats and Free Soilers bore down George N. Briggs, a kind and upright man of

* Castle Garden Meeting, Oct. 30, 1850.

† T. Weed's Memoirs, c 17.

abstemious habits, who for seven placid years had ruled the State as chief magistrate with scarcely a personal enemy. Briggs had a plurality of the votes, but not a majority; and the choice devolving in consequence upon a legislature politically opposed to the Whigs, George S. Boutwell, a young aspirant, took office in his place.

Not only in the next House, but in the complexion of the Senate, was change portended this winter. A close and prolonged struggle in the New York legislature ended in the choice of Hamilton Fish, the late governor, and a progressive Whig of the Seward type, in place of Dickinson. Another Northern compromiser of the Senate was earlier supplanted by Solomon Foote, of Vermont. Ewing, twice a brief cabinet officer, ended at length a public career, honorable, but singularly ill-starred; since the legislature of Ohio supplanted him in the Senate by Benjamin F. Wade, a younger Whig, of aggressive tendencies against slavery. For here, as in some other States, which had raised the Free Soil standard in 1848, the new drift of affairs gave Free Soilers the local balance of power, and they fused gladly with Democrats against a chance administration, whose every effort was to crush them. The cup of old line Whigs was bitterest in Massachusetts, where Webster's magic spell was broken. Their proud ascendancy for so many years recalled traditions of early Federalism and made virtue respectable. Coalition, with its truck and dicker, did not cease with elevating the plebeian Boutwell; but statesmen too highly polished to bear rude rubs were brushed aside. Two new men were elected to the Senate, both of Free Soil proclivities, though one must own, high-toned and scholarly. Robert Rantoul, a Democrat, took Webster's unexpired term; and after long weeks of balloting, with Winthrop for the Whig contestant, and another fugitive slave arrest intervening, the six years' vacancy fell to Charles Sumner,* a lawyer with flowery diversions, now called for the first time into public life. This latter choice was destined to

* Chosen April 24, 1851, on the 24th ballot.

important consequences. A young man yet, tall, handsome, and of English fastidiousness in dress and habits, Sumner was the Sir Galahad of Boston idealists. His anti-slavery affinities raised prejudice against him in the choice civic circle where Webster was worshipped ; and he was thought somewhat of a dilettante in public matters, a sort of literary philanthropist who could say bold things out of season and withal in flowery and pedantic phrase. But this true knight was courageous and capable of a commanding range, as experience proved ; no social circle which dared to speak plainly was too high-toned for him ; and to the sickly moral atmosphere of our Potomac capital he was like the advent of a north wind. Yet Massachusetts could have made no selection so galling to Webster, for it provoked the comparison of high public standards. "Obey the constitution," was the injunction of the old statesman. But the new one occupied himself in drawing up personal liberty acts and in every way thwarting the return of fugitive slaves. "The public conscience," said he, in a Faneuil Hall harangue, "will not allow a man who has trodden our streets as a free man to be dragged away as a slave."* That utterance, more than anything else, in the present feeling of Massachusetts, carried Sumner into the United States Senate to sting as he might.

Other States had various vicissitudes this winter. In California, † and in Connecticut, too, turmoil kept a senatorial seat long in suspense ; New Jersey and Delaware supplied new Democrats to the upper branch, in Commodore Stockton and James A. Bayard ; while Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Mississippi, Florida, completed the changing cycle. In Ohio, Michigan, Virginia, and Indiana, and prospectively in other States, conventions were in order ; and our mid-century was a fruitful season for remodelling State constitutions.

In the midst of anxious suspense over the next Con-

* See Liberator, Oct. 18, 1850.

† In California 144 ballots were taken with no approach to a choice, and the legislature adjourned *sine die*.

gress, and while the pillars of the Union seemed still to tremble, the second session of Congress performed quite as little as it promised. Each house was called to order by its Southern presiding officer: King, of Alabama, in the Senate; Cobb, of Georgia, in the House. The President's message, his first official exposition upon the agitating topics of the day, reflected, as had been anticipated, the opinions of the great compromisers. It recognized for a domestic policy no guide but the constitution as interpreted by the courts and custom; it deprecated all irritation and alienating tendencies among the several members of the Union; and it pledged the Executive to take the utmost care that all laws of the land should be faithfully executed. The peace measures of the long session were like an Ararat for the national ark to rest upon. "By this adjustment," observed the message, "we have been rescued from the wide and boundless agitation that surrounded us, and have a firm, distinct, and legal ground to rest upon." *

Standing thus positively upon legality and legislative settlement, so far as the slavery problem was concerned, the administration now probed gently to discover whether some change might not be made in the tariff, and political effort turned back into those more practical and profitable channels which had once engaged our national discussion. Fillmore had favoring words on those good old Whig topics of protection and internal improvements, and his message addressed itself to material business with a right good will. But these spurring suggestions fell upon dull ears. The storm of the former session was followed by a lull, and ten angry months of debate left suds of oratory. It takes time to turn from rebellion to the science of the breakfast table. Naturally, then, this short session was unfruitful. Trivial talk characterized it, and still more trivial action. One act reduced letter postage, when prepaid, to three cents for three thousand miles, and simplified

* Cong. Globe; President's message, Dec. 3, 1850.

other rates.* A bill passed for ascertaining land claims in California, all lands not established by private title to be held as public domain.† The abuse of constructive mileage was repealed, under which \$40,000 had lately been paid to senators for attending an executive session without travelling a single mile; a soldier's asylum was established, and limits were placed to the liability of ship-owners as common carriers. Finally, a joint resolution empowered the President to convey the Hungarian exile, Kossuth, and his companions, to this country in a public ship upon their liberation by the Turks.‡ All this, however, can add little historical consequence to the proceedings of a body which occupies the central span of our nineteenth century as "the Congress of the Compromise Measures."

This session was not free from asperity of discussion. It was the last in which Clay could ever bear an active part; and the faltering tones of his ineffective appeals for a protective tariff, for river and harbor improvement, for whatever policy might divert the current of thought from the sectional subject, betrayed his deep-seated anxiety. In January, 1851, his name headed a list of forty-four names appended to a nervous manifesto by members of both Houses which proclaimed that sectional strife could be averted only by a strict adherence to the compromise settlement. In order to keep that settlement inviolate these signers would support no man for office, of whatever party, who was not known to be opposed to the renewal of slavery agitation. Discussion had scarcely opened, as it was sure of opening, upon the practical mischiefs which attended the enforcement of the fugitive slave act as it stood, when the Kentuckian tried to lead it off to the less explosive topic of the African slave-trade; and when came the exciting news of the Shadrach rescue in Boston, he made the indignant moment his own by calling for official information, and professing himself shocked beyond the

* Act March 3, 1851, c. 20. See also vol. iv. p. 550.

† Act March 3, 1851, c. 41.

‡ See 9 U. S. Stats. at Large.

power of words at so sacrilegious an interference with justice. But still did he labor patiently to smooth the affront, admonishing his Southern friends that they must not be too exacting. And thus gently upbraiding the errant on one side or the other, did this wonderful old shepherd of the people advance his flock upon the narrow footpath of national conciliation ; keeping up the while that sanguine and cheerful tone which, through all the bitter discouragements of his life, and despite the iridescence of his principles, was his chief gift of inspiration.*

SECTION II.

PERIOD OF THIRTY-SECOND CONGRESS.

MARCH 4, 1851—MARCH 3, 1853.

THE sober second thought of the people at length sustained President Fillmore in his purpose to uphold the peace settlement of 1850 as a final and comprehensive one. His lack of personal pretence, his clear and emphatic expression, gave force to his approval of the legislative policy, obnoxious though the latter might be to a large minority of both sections. Republics incline to temporize with problems which are found difficult to manage, and temporizing is the essence of all government which is carried on by popular assemblies. Few turned back the page far enough to read the fate of Clay's tariff compromise of 1833, so prone are American citizens to treat the present on its detached merits. Few measured the danger of granting half that a State demands upon its open threat of disloyalty. Few calculated the probable duration of a settlement based upon the idea that the Union had ceased to expand, and that sectional pride would not resist the edicts of nature nor stretch the national boundaries. This fact, at least, was positive : that

* Colton's Last Years, 2 Schurz's Clay, 227.

the whole course of events was soon reactionary under the impulse of the new compact. The country grew sick of the slavery question and wished agitators at the devil. Good men, North and South, made the Constitution their fetish more than ever, and, like a prudent husband who is yoked with an irritable spouse, they forced themselves to love for the sake of quiet.

It is fair to anti-slavery statesmen of these times to say that they never meant to meddle or interfere with slavery in its local domains. Calhoun had been bitterly unjust to the North on that point. The stronger section was scrupulous to respect State rights in that respect. Not one leader on freedom's side but disclaimed frequently—as he had to do—all affiliation with the mischievous agitators who preached down the Constitution and its restraints. Chase, in the Senate, had said, with great dignity, that while anti-slavery men would restrict slavery within the limits of the slave States, and “not allow it within the exclusive jurisdiction of the national government,” their fidelity to the Union was immovable.* And Sumner, too, though turning the radical phrase to its severest taunt, drew the same line of distinction upon his native soil, and in the first flush of triumph over his call to public life. “I will oppose,” he said, in his letter of acceptance, “every effort to loosen the ties of Union, as well as all sectionalism, whether it appear in unconstitutional efforts to carry freedom to the slave States, or unconstitutional efforts of the South, aided by Northern allies, to carry the sectional evil of slavery into our free States.” †

In their hope or apprehension of a future severance, the sanguine friends of slavery encouraged new conquests to the southward. This to disunion dreamers promised stability and strength to the future Southern confederacy, while others saw in such a policy the diving-bell for recovering the sunken equilibrium of sectional strength. The late war nourished in Southern soldiers contempt for

* 2 Schurz's Clay, 382.

† Newspapers.

Spanish-Americans and the appetite for military glory. No territorial conquest appeared just now so tempting to them as that of Cuba, "the pearl of the Antilles," splendidly planted at the entrance of the Gulf and Caribbean waters, rich in negro slaves and the commerce of slave plantations. It was a luscious prize, but not easily to be procured; for the jealousy of England and France protected it against Southern cupidity better than the fleets and armies of its proud but indolent owner. Here was Spain's last foothold upon the great hemisphere which Columbus had won for her, and here the flying step of monarchy was arrested in an earthly paradise.

Narciso Lopez, a South American by birth,—a refugee from Havana, and a military adventurer,—led Quitman and others of our Gulf citizens to believe that Cuba was disaffected to the mother country, ripe for revolution, and ready to drop into the lap of the United States. With such assistance he arranged three successive expeditions of invasion. The first was frustrated by the ^{1849.} vigilance of President Taylor, who issued in ^{August.} season a warning proclamation; the second and third were armed attempts, important enough to be ruinous to those engaged in them. About the last of ^{1850.} April, 1850, and while Clay's compromise plan ^{May.} was in the committee room, Lopez sailed from New Orleans with some three hundred Americans of our slaveholding States under his command, and after baffling one of our naval vessels which was sent to intercept the expedition, he landed at Cardenas, overcame the guards of the crown and took possession. But no general uprising of the people followed; and driven from the island in a few days by the government troops, Lopez retreated to Savannah, where he was arrested for violating our neutrality laws, but was discharged for want of proof to convict him.

The third Lopez expedition was the boldest and the most disastrous. With the port of New Orleans for a rendezvous, where our Whig collector was far ^{1851.} from vigilant, Lopez organized a new force of

about five hundred followers, draining, as before, upon the purses of zealous politicians in our Southern State rights or disunion party. The steamer "Pampero" bore the party in midsummer out of New Orleans harbor. Hearing at Key West that a revolt had taken place at a favorable point on the island, Lopez changed his original plan of descending upon its Southern coast, but missing the place where he had meant to disembark, he touched shore by night at a lonely spot on the north-western coast. Colonel Crittenden, a subordinate, was left at this point with one hundred men in charge of the stores and baggage, while Lopez, the next day, advanced with the rest of his command to the town of Los Pozas, whose inhabitants fled, instead of lending their enthusiastic aid. The invading force thus separated never reunited. Crittenden's band, soon putting to sea in boats to escape the Spanish soldiery, were captured by a Spanish war steamer and taken to Havana, where, after a summary trial, they were shot on the 17th of the month.

Lopez, in the meantime, had advanced but a few miles into the interior when the government troops fell upon these missionaries of freedom and inflicted a terrible loss. Disheartened most of all by finding, too late, that the Cubans themselves were indifferent to his exploit, Lopez next marched for the mountains, hoping to escape pursuit until, by some means or other, he could regain the sea-coast. But, surprised on the 24th by an overwhelming Spanish force, the invaders were completely routed, and from that time were hunted down in their flight by inhabitants of every description. The chief, four days after, was captured by peasants with a few of his straggling followers, and handed over to a military force, that marched ^{September 1.} the prisoners by night to Havana. Lopez was executed on the first sunrise of September, by means of the Spanish garrote, an instrument which our people now read about for the first time; the victim of the law being clasped fast in an iron chair, while an iron screw pierced through a brass collar to the spinal marrow.

This execution was publicly performed in the midst of an approving crowd.*

President Fillmore, in a proclamation had solemnly stigmatized all such hostile adventures from our shores as plunder and robbery, violations of national and international law alike; and had warned April 25. American citizens who aided foreigners in such projects against a friendly power that they would forfeit all claims to the protection or interference of this government. And following close upon this last tragical fiasco, the September-French and British governments issued orders December. to their respective fleets on the West India station to prevent, by force if need be, all further invasions of the kind upon the Cuban coast. Precautions, of course, were taken on behalf of the United States to prevent search or other infringement upon the rights of our flag; and no collision arose.† Cuban authorities, however, were angry and suspicious of American designs; and arresting an American journalist named Thrasher, who resided at Havana, on a charge of complicity with the Lopez expeditions, they thrust him into a dark dungeon, and presently had him sentenced by court-martial to imprisonment on the coast of Africa. No little irritation was shown by Southern friends of Lopez, and upon the terrible news of disaster, a mob at New Orleans attacked the houses of Spanish residents and tore into pieces a flag on the building of the consulate. But by another 1852. year there was a better feeling on both sides, June- and Spain, on her part, acceding to the plea of November. our government, that the punishment inflicted was sufficient already, ordered the remaining American prisoners released, and opened the Cuban ports once more to full commerce. Congress indemnified for the mob violence.

For aiding the second of these Lopez invasions, several disunion leaders of the South were prosecuted, among whom was General Quitman. To Quitman, it appears, Lopez and his revolutionary junta offered the chief com-

* Newspapers.

† President's message, December, 1851.

mand of the enterprise,—a responsibility which the Mississippian declined, because, as he expressed it, his sense of honor confined him at this time to the greater emergency of Southern rights at home; but he pressed the

1851. cause with enthusiasm. His sense of honor must
January— have been strung higher than his sense of loyalty
February. to his government or respect for foreign rights.

Fillmore's administration arrested him as his mind was immersed in these and the kindred secession schemes. Rather than plunge his State into rebellion by resisting Federal process he resigned the office of governor, and entering his recognizance at New Orleans, took his chances of trial with the others. Upon a third disagreement of

March. the jury in a test case brought for breach of our neutrality laws, the whole prosecution was abandoned and Quitman discharged with the rest.* Cuban

buccaneering was quite popular in New Orleans and through our whole Gulf border, so long as remained the shadow of a hope that the game which brought in Texas as a State could be played over. But the shocking fate of Lopez and Crittenden sent a cold tremor over the frames of their guilty abettors. And from that time forward, although Cuban annexation was warmly and constantly cherished by leading spirits of the South, the effort, while secession coiled itself to sleep, was rather to gain the precious jewel from Spain by the arts of national diplomacy.

Cuba was not the only neighboring soil where suspicious watch was kept upon the aggrandizing spirit of the United States. In Mexico, whose life-blood seemed oozing out drop by drop in intestine struggles, and in Central America, there was good reason to fear aggression from this lawless and half rebellious Southern element in our midst, which sought compensation in new conquests. Besides "garrote" came now the word "filibuster" from the Spanish vocabulary into our own; meaning, as thus applied, the adventurer from the United States who at-

* 2 Claiborne's Quitman, c. 15.

tempted to rob these countries of their domains on the pretext of rescuing them from anarchy.

Of filibustering expeditions and lone star associations we heard enough in the next decade, and the gift of a grave was the usual end of them. The local prosperity they meant to confer was the prosperity of sugar and cotton culture, and their boon of popular institutions, the institution of slavery. It was a discouraging obstacle to this co-extension towards the tropics that a mottled and hybrid race peopled the crescent of these island waters, whose absorption with their white conquerors would be difficult. That difficulty, indeed, had been enough to make Calhoun shrink from the propagating task in that direction.

But mingled with new projects of expansion came others consistent with the welfare of the Union; and in the blending of such policies and possibilities, loyal and disloyal, the Monroe Doctrine took on its lighter or deeper shade. Unlike the Southern Democrats, Whigs wished no new annexation. Hence the differing tendencies in treaties and diplomatic arrangements between this Whig administration and its successors up to the civil war. Quick transit to the Pacific, the connection of two shores by railway and ship canal,—this was the great national or, rather, international interest on which negotiation turned. And, after all, the immediate consequence was very little. Though ridiculed by the sapient of this age as a “railway to the moon,” an iron road of our own, built across the continent and controlled within our national jurisdiction, was worth all these soil privileges in the narrower region below our borders. The three convenient routes there open to rivalry were at Tehuantepec, Nicaragua, and Panama.

The increase of transportation facilities now fairly engrossed the attention of our Northern people, together with the more rapid diffusion of the world’s daily news, as befitted America’s extensive stretch on the vast convex. About the time that Taylor died, and when the Liverpool steamer which was bound to New York

1850.
July.

arrived off Halifax, she was boarded, a hundred miles at sea, by a news schooner of the New York associated press, whose European budget was telegraphed from Halifax to New York by way of Portland. That was a new exploit

1851. for American journalism; and twelve months later, by means of a temporary route through

Lake Nicaragua came the news to New York from California and the Pacific in twenty-nine days, another notable abridgment of distance.* The British Cunard line had now a rival in the American Collins, rapid but less substantial. As a first step towards spanning our wide empire of the continent, a line of stages was established to run monthly between Independence and Santa Fé; and the coach was built water-tight to serve as a boat in crossing streams.

The railway system of the United States was fast develop-

1851. oping; and before 1852 10,087 miles of track were

finished and in operation, while thousands more were in process of construction. The iron network was woven closest in New England; more than one-fifth of the whole being located in that section, and about 1,900 miles in New York State. The outlay involved in building and equipping these roads was reckoned not very exactly at \$370,000,000, or about \$36,700 a mile.† Of European railways lately opened, that from St. Petersburg to Moscow, which occupied eight years in building, was remarkable for its length. The longest American road by far, under control of a single company, was the New York and Erie, which after many vicissitudes trailed its four hundred and seventy miles across the Empire State in the present spring, and from the Hudson River to Dunkirk. In this arduous undertaking the usual order was reversed, and a metallic highway bore with difficulty the rivalry of a canal. At first the State loaned its bonds; then it relieved the road of the lien of those bonds on condition

* The Panama railway, which gave the transit of the isthmus the decided advantage over all other routes, was not opened until January, 1855. 18 H. H. Bancroft, 139.

† Tribune Almanac, 1852.

that a single track was in good running order before the middle of May. By dint of great effort the company ran its first engine over the road by the last of April, and the road was formally opened with a grand celebration on the 14th of May.

True to their traditions, the Whigs fostered all internal enterprises like these from the public treasury. In New York a political issue of this year was the enlargement of the Erie Canal so as to bring it into a better condition to meet the expected competition. The constitution of that State set apart yearly the surplus revenues of the canal for such a purpose; but the funds accumulated so slowly that it was now proposed to borrow the needful capital on the credit of that yearly surplus and enlarge the canal at once. It was a Whig measure, favored by a Whig governor, and indorsed by a Whig legislature. But the Democrats were vehemently opposed to it; after the bill had passed the House, twelve Democratic members of the Senate resigned their seats, and with the constitutional quorum broken, the legislative session came to a sudden ^{April 17} end. Both parties made their appeal to the people; special elections were held to fill the Senate vacancies, ^{May-July.} which left the Democrats worse off than before; and in an extra session which soon convened, the canal bill became a law.

This year of railroad jubilee brought the Presidential suite in full parade, to divert the public mind from the cursed "one idea" to dollars and heavy produce. President Fillmore, attended by Webster, Graham, Crittenden, and Hall, of his cabinet, left Washington on a May morning to attend the public opening of the Erie railroad,—an event which to the good citizens of Gotham recalled De Witt Clinton and the dedication of the great canal. There were speeches at Castle Garden, a civic procession, a special train across the State to Dunkirk, huzzas, and crowds everywhere; after which reversing the route by way of Rochester, Albany, New York, and Philadelphia, the President reached the capital once more after a twelve days' jollity. In September the

September 17-19. President again came northward with part of his suite to be the guest of Boston, when its railway line was opened to Ogdensburg, thus uniting with new way-bills to the Great Lakes. Lord Elgin graced the latter occasion, with other notables, such as the Puritan capital liked to draw from Canada; and the celebration, of which one feature was an aquatic excursion down the harbor, lasted three days.

The President in each of these tours spoke briefly and unpretentiously, his chief grace being a modest dignity which became well his handsome person. But the conspicuous figure on the Erie occasion was the Secretary of State, whose unrivalled eloquence and renown marked him as spokesman and defender of the administration. Trade, commerce, and solid business looked up for his revivifying influence, and the Union felt safe as his oracles were uttered. Whatever might have been Webster's first misgivings as to the new national peace measures, he had ere this scattered them to the winds; if he felt at all fearful that he had made the mistake of his life pride kept him from betraying himself. But Massachusetts and her god-like son by adoption were at the parting of the roads.

April. Webster did not attend the three days' jubilee among Boston's guests. He made an April visit to the State which his politics had betrayed to the Free Soil coalition; his friends prepared to give him a reception at Faneuil Hall and enjoy his eloquence once more. Upon some technical pretext the use of the hall was at first refused by the Boston aldermen; but the public voice condemning that indignity, the vote was rescinded while the other civic branch offered to tender amends. Webster's feelings were deeply hurt. He declined the invitation now pressed upon him; "nor shall I enter Faneuil Hall," he responded, "till its gates shall be thrown open, wide open," not with impetuous recoil, "but on golden hinges moving."* To Americans, however, to "lovers of their

* 2 Curtis's Webster, c 37. This Miltonian passage, which was in Webster's own vein, suggested the fine responsive exordium of Choate's

country and their whole country," the self-exiled prophet appealed in other States. After the Erie pageant Webster tarried in New York, leaving Fillmore and the rest to return, and made strong speeches at Buffalo, Syracuse, Albany, and New York city in personal vindication of his course. He was not for concessions to slavery, he declared repeatedly, but he would maintain to the utmost of his power, and in the face of all danger, the constitutional rights of South well as North. And thus, as the temper of events compelled, he defended most warmly that which his own section most strongly assailed; his desertion of the cause of freedom in the new territories and that rigorous fugitive slave law. With the ardor of a new convert he denounced severely all who counselled anything but absolute acquiescence in the legislation of 1850 as peculiarly solemn and unchangeable, though framed without the slightest submission to the people. In June the great premier put before a Virginia audience at Capon Springs an aspect of the question more appropriate to that latitude. With assurances that he meant to carry out to its fullest extent a constitution whose clause of fugitive slave surrender was as obligatory as any other part of it, he observed that if Congress should provide no remedy for such a clause "the South would no longer be bound to observe the compact." * Was this the same orator who had argued in that immortal reply to Hayne that the Constitution was no compact at all?

But in that same Virginia speech Webster said, with splendid emphasis, that the first step taken in any programme of secession would be promptly met.† And in all his utterances of this period, Webster, like Clay, took fully the ground that the Union must be preserved in the last emergency against all who dared raise hand to destroy

speech on a later occasion, when Webster's friends gathered at Faneuil Hall, and its doors were open again.

* 2 Curtis's Webster, c. 37.

† Ib.

it. The question of the day was not, "Are you Whig or Democrat?" but, "Are you for the Union?"

With somewhat of morbid foreboding, it now became the style to toast and salute the Union on each public anniversary, as a patient in delicate health, and to invoke the spirit of the great founder whose bones were at Mount Vernon, as in some sort a patron saint, whose constant intercessions alone could save the people. Independence day in 1851 was celebrated with more than the usual de-

^{July 4.} precation of all fraternal strife; and on that day was laid the corner-stone of the extension of that capitol whose first foundation had been set by Washington's own hand. Webster's speech was the grandest of this junior occasion; and beneath the stone was deposited a document written by his own hand. Through its language of confidence vibrated a hollow and uncertain sound.*

Occasions like these, with their eloquent appeals to the national sentiment, must have produced strong effect; and all the stronger in that the effort of 1851. Fillmore's administration was to allay excitement instead of increasing it. Moral agitation reeled backward, shocked and stunned by the blows which fell upon it in the name of loyalty and the public safety. A year wrought great changes in political circles. Tranquillity succeeded to turbulence. In our free States Whig governors, who had lately suggested fitting changes in the fugitive slave act, now muzzled their messages and fell into the fashion of declaiming that constitutional obligations must be fulfilled and the whole compromise of 1850 maintained intact as a

* "If, therefore, it shall hereafter be the will of God that this structure shall fall from its base, that its foundations be upturned, and this deposit brought to the eyes of men, be it then known that on this day the Union of the United States of America stands firm, that the Constitution still exists and with all its original usefulness and glory; growing every day stronger in the affections of the great body of the American people, and attracting more and more the admiration of the world." See 2 Curtis's Webster, 521; newspapers of the day.

finality. Of this latter doctrine, however, Northern Democrats took the lion's share in the glory; and while it seemed as if Fillmore Whigs and conservative Democrats entered arm in arm the same great temple of national immolation, it was the anti-administration party who reaped the chief advantage of the sacrifice. State after State, district after district of the national House, passed into control of these tried and trusty allies of the slave oligarchy as safer custodians of the new covenant. In New Hampshire, there being no choice by the people, Dinsmore, a Democrat, was elected governor by the legislature. By a parallel experience, Connecticut espoused a governor of similar politics in Thomas H. Seymour. These were among the events of spring. For the fall campaign Massachusetts Whigs nominated Winthrop upon the platform of entire confidence in Daniel Webster; but the Democrats ran Boutwell again, insisting with stronger emphasis upon the compromise measures, and in their strange coalition with Free Soilers prevailed. The coalition legislature of that State which closed its long session a few months earlier, had rattled hard the dry bones of Whig respectability and privilege. Besides acts for general banking, secret ballots, and a partial plurality, it had dared to propose a convention for remodelling the State constitution, whose crumpled parchment, with quaint expressions, was steeped in revolutionary memories. True to her conservative instincts, Massachusetts could not remain long under such sacrilegious leaders. But in the dissension, now fatal, of conscience and commercial Whigs, and in the stifled repugnance of the former to inevitable results, only one other State of the free North besides Massachusetts clung still to the party which came in triumphant under the lamented Taylor.* Vermont, though a State of radical tendencies, elected its Whig governor this year, and in a Free Soil convention John Van Buren was heard denouncing the fugitive slave law as uncon-

* Vermont had passed a personal liberty bill and maintained strong hostility to the fugitive-slave law.

stitutional. Elsewhere Northern Whigs began losing their hold in spite of the national patronage. Pennsylvania passed to the Democrats and Governor Bigler; Ohio remained with the opposition as before, though the Whigs put up Vinton, one of the ablest and purest of their party, as a candidate. In New York, where only inferior officers were chosen this year, the Democrats carried nearly the whole list, though by a vote very close. Of States lately admitted, Wisconsin had little sympathy with the Whigs, while California, like an ingrate, turned its back upon the weak-kneed friends who had sacrificed so much to bring her into the Union as a free State, and embraced the horny-handed Democracy.*

The trend of Southern politics favored in like manner the late compromise measures and national integrity. Strong effort had been made in the cotton-raising States, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi, to bring the whole slave section into hostile concert, but the effort failed. Louisiana, North Carolina, and most of the border States were disposed to treat the late settlement as a finality. Texas was committed by her acceptance of a price for New Mexico. At the instance of Secretary Stuart of the Interior, the Virginia assembly posed once more as umpire, and in a series of complacent resolutions, passed with great unanimity, which were transmitted to the Executives of every State in the Union except offending Vermont, pronounced anathemas upon anti-slavery societies and Southern disunion gatherings alike, and pointed to the Constitution of the United States as the strong rock and refuge for the rights of the whole Confederacy. It was about this same time that the legislature of South Carolina proposed to the slaveholding States a Southern Congress. Quitman's arrest and resignation,† while in the full pant for secession with Mississippi in the lead, left him a mere private citizen, to solicit votes for governor at the coming

* Newspapers of the day; Tribune Almanac.

† *Supra*, p. 218.

election. There was great excitement throughout this State ; the friends of compromise, now styled "the Union party," nominated Foote as their candidate for governor. Quitman, put forward by the "Southern party," or disunionists, was not a man of expedients or calm reserve. Heedless of the warning that Virginia and the rest were leaving his boat high and dry, he proposed secession still, in bold and disdainful speech, unless new and preposterous guarantees to slavery were added. Foote, with his fussy Unionism and ready pistol-case, carried the voters ; both he and Quitman stumping the State with bitter personal encounter. September elections to a pro-
posed State convention resulted in a very large
^{September-}
majority of delegates favorable to the Union ; and Quitman quitted the canvass for governor in consequence,
^{November.} deeply mortified. Jefferson Davis was now prevailed upon to lead the forlorn hope of the Southern cause. Sick at the time and almost blind, he resigned the seat in the Senate to which he had lately been re-chosen, and made a sharp and vigorous contest. Foote, of course, defeated him, but the vanquished secessionist found reason to boast that in six short weeks he had cut down the Union majority a good third from the figures as Quitman left them.* The result of the autumn elections elsewhere at the South favored still more decidedly the cause of national conciliation on the new basis. Alabama pronounced, with scarcely less emphasis, for the Union. Even South Carolina cast her secession schemes aside for the present ; though here, in this latter State, so feebly burned the lamp of loyalty that both local parties demanded new redress for the South ; the one favored separate and immediate secession, and the other se-

* 2 Claiborne's Quitman, c. 16 ; 1 Jefferson Davis's Southern Confederacy, 19. Davis, in a letter written in 1853 (Davis, ib. 22), denied that any party in Mississippi ever advocated disunion. This is contrary, however, to the current testimony of 1851. And see 2 Claiborne's Quitman, with its confidential correspondence of that year. But Davis was much more moderate in his speeches than Quitman had been,—taking the tone of one who meant to leave all "to the dictates of his State."

cession when other Southern States were ready to co-operate.*

Indeed there were few, very few public men of South Carolina by this time who dared maintain the supremacy of the Union at all hazards. Nearly solitary among them to deny all right of secession, was the old veteran Joel R. Poinsett. James Hamilton and other sagacious advisers, owned dissatisfaction with the present compromise; a new crisis might yet arise, and we could only "wait and see." Hayne and Rhett, on the other hand, were red-hot for secession sooner or later. South Carolina and her rulers drew the whole soul of Calhoun's dogmas through their lips as sunlight drinks the dew. And it was to meet disunionists like these, whether present or prospective, that Clay, in a letter from Ashland this autumn, while inculcating the duty of adhering firmly to the late settlement, insisted powerfully that there was no such thing as peaceable secession; that it was the right and the duty of the Union and the general government to prevent any State from seceding by the strong arm of military power.†

Both Union and Disunion candidates in the cotton States this year, had been mostly identified with the Democrats. Throughout the Union, a re-united country meant a re-united national Democracy.

After a great popular tumult comes tranquillity when the exciting cause of disturbance has been removed. Patriotism for a space is on its good behavior. A favorite engraving of the day bore the name of "Union." It showed sage statesmen of both sections, gathering near an effigy of Washington, with the national emblems in their keeping; Clay, Webster, Fillmore, and Cass were among the figures in the foreground, with General Scott; Calhoun, too, with pallid face, but not his companion of the shades, brown Zachary Taylor, and still less Chase or Seward.

* Current newspapers; Johnston's Alexander H. Stephens, 264.

† 2 Curtis's Webster, c. 38; 2 Schurz's Clay. In this same letter Henry Clay declared his conviction, and very properly, that the Kentucky and Virginia Resolutions of 1798-1799 afforded "no color or countenance to the pretensions of secession."

In such an epoch some novelty is eagerly sought, something to divert discussion, and give earnest to the world that "our flag is there." These were years of furor in our chief cities. The first furor was in 1850, when Jenny Lind, the Swedish nightingale, landed at America, and under protection of Barnum, a showman ^{1850,} September. artful in puffery, made a musical tour of unparalleled success. More than twenty thousand persons greeted this queen of song when she landed at the New York pier; and so ardent was the bidding that native vocalists, seeking to light their little torches of notoriety in the flame of her widely advertised renown, would pay \$625 or more for a first ticket at her concert when the seats were auctioned off. Besides her exquisite voice she had the gift of a sweet disposition and unaffected kindness.

The second furor was when London opened her crystal palace for the first exhibition the world ever saw of the industries of all nations. Wild was the enthusiasm of our citizens at home on hearing that, ^{1851,} May-October. at the international regatta held in July on the English coast before the crowned heads of Europe, the yacht "America," flying the stars and stripes, had easily borne off the Queen's gold cup. Swiftness and grace of model were the distinction of American ship-building, here as in the war of 1812.

The third and greatest furor of the times was kindled by the arrival of Louis Kossuth, the Hungarian exile, in the autumn of this latter year. A man of culture and liberal ideas, who had earned the right ^{1851.} to his opinions by suffering imprisonment for them under an Austrian despot, he emulated the example of the latest French revolution by inciting his native Hungary to struggle for national independence. Freedom shed a false light, here as repeatedly in European countries and over the domains of France herself. Austria suppressed the revolution, and Kossuth, when ^{1848-1851.} all hope was lost, fled with his compatriots into the Turkish dominions. Not Austria alone, but Russia de-

manded of that most imbecile of European powers that the fugitives should be given up. But the Hungarian struggle had enlisted the deep sympathies of our American people; and England joined other liberal powers of Europe in aiding an arrangement by which Kossuth, instead of being handed over to his enemies, might cross the ocean and seek in the United States an asylum. Turkey, thus braced up, withstood the menaces of Russia and Austria and refused to surrender the fugitives.

Pursuant to the wish of Congress,* President Fillmore sent one of our men-of-war, the frigate "Mississippi," to

the Mediterranean for the purpose of bringing
1851. Kossuth to America; and early in September
that distinguished exile with his suite embarked from Con-
September-stantinople, westward bound. But regarding
November. himself rather as the vindicator of his people's cause than a downtrodden exile, Kossuth turned at once the fertile resources of his eloquence and personal address to coining the compassion, which foreign powers had extended out of pure benevolence, into active co-operation for another revolution. He left the United States frigate at Gibraltar, and sailed for Albion's Isle. With Louis Napoleon across the channel, plotting at this very moment to seize the reins of imperial power, the English ministry had abundant cause for caution in dealing with leaders of failure. Sailing thence on a passenger

steamer across the Atlantic, Kossuth reached
December. New York Bay on the morning of December 4th.
The fame of his misfortunes, his eloquence, his noble personal bearing, and his fresh aspirations for his country had preceded him.

Kossuth and downtrodden Hungary absorbed the American mind for the next six months. Crowds thronged to
1851. see the brave Magyar as he journeyed hither and
December- thither, and caught the inspiration of his flaming
1852, eloquence. Our people were still very fond of
June. oratory, and Kossuth's remarkable speeches, uttered in

* Joint Resolution, March 3, 1851.

fluent English, were a rich treat. His picture was displayed in a thousand shops, in the repose of a portrait, or as the emblematic warrior trampling down Austria's eagle and crown. The Kossuth soft hat, the Kossuth mustache and beard, and the Kossuth overcoat with flowing sleeves, became the fashionable craze. After waiting a day at Staten Island, in order to give New York's city fathers time to prepare a grand reception, the Hungarian, with his suite, struck the first cyclone of applause at Castle Garden landing, where, after making a brief address to the multitude, he took his place in a vast procession which paraded the streets under a military escort. A few days of recuperation were followed by a public dinner at which he made a long and able speech. Various banquets followed, among them one from the New York press, over which Bryant, the poet-journalist, presided. The keynote of hospitality thus struck rang out clear and lusty in the other cities, east and west, which Kossuth afterwards visited, on a tour which gave full scope to his rare powers of picturesque and felicitous expression. It added much to the impression of his distinguished mien, that he could address our crowds so admirably in their own tongue. That of itself was an appeal to common brotherhood; and Kossuth spoke, besides, for his country, for liberty, not for himself. Some of his imagery could not be forgotten by those who heard him, as in one passage, for instance, where he described the spirits of the slain Hungarian heroes, hovering over the battlefield, and crying, "Liberty or death."

It was not strange that a man of such gifts, overflowing with zeal for a cause which to him was life itself, should have essayed a task which, to any foreigner and especially to one who had fought and failed, was formidable: that, namely, of embroiling the United States in a distant European revolution. Kossuth's visit to this country has been likened to that of Lafayette,* which, in truth, was the only tour of a European which ever yet surpassed it

* Vol. iii. p. 316.

in warmth; and had Kossuth, like Lafayette, accepted the ovation as one of personal sympathy, its exit would have been illustrious. But great orators are not always consummate statesmen, and Kossuth overshot the mark by contending against the soundest traditions of our national policy, and trying almost to set the people against their rulers to bring about intervention for Hungary. This carried the parallel of his visit closer to that of Genet in 1793,* though free from the outrageous intrusion which made that earlier mission so insufferable. For Kossuth had dignity of character; he was cool and rational; he pushed his point, it is true, but stopped short of ridiculous folly. He knew too well, moreover, that no government stood behind him to give weight to his credentials. This effort, unexpected at his first rapturous welcome, produced a strong reaction against the Hungarian exile; and on his return to Europe, the following June, he had the crestfallen aspect of a guest who somehow had outworn his welcome, and had sunk, like the cause he supported, into an object of listless curiosity.

At the civic banquets in New York, Kossuth indicated the real purpose of his visit. He wished to procure, through public or private means, the sinews of fresh resistance, and induce this great republic of freemen, as well as Great Britain, to prevent Austria and Russia from crushing Hungary to the wall. Well prepared for the discussion he must provoke, he argued skilfully against that traditional policy of non-interference in European affairs which bore Washington's immortal sanction. He did not appreciate how strongly the Monroe Doctrine confirmed that policy by confining our aims and influence to our own hemisphere; nor how, after all, like every sound system of diplomacy, our whole policy rested upon that impregnable base of national self-interest, against which all appeals to wars of sentiment and to philanthropic entanglements for the benefit of other countries, must dash in vain. That eighteenth century tradition, argued

* Vol. i. p 246.

the orator, was primitive, worn out, unsuitable to this broader age ; and there was such a thing as intervening in Europe without embroiling ourselves. Washington had in view a temporary situation, neutrality in war. Was that not very different from influence and intercession in peace ? Could only great Britain and the United States join in protesting against Russian intervention, that would stop it. And with that end in view he called upon the people of the United States to hold meetings and urge the President and Congress to take such a step.

A few days before Kossuth touched the American strand the thirty-second Congress convened for a session 1851, as frivolous as ever was held during our first December 1. century of independence, and yet the longest of them all, save that session of the compromise two years before. The weakening of the Whig party was obvious ; their strength had frittered away. In a Senate of sixty-two members, with two vacancies to be filled, the Whigs numbered twenty-four, the opposition thirty-three, while Hale, Sumner, and Chase ranked as distinctive Free Soilers. In the House were eighty-eight Whigs, one hundred and forty opposition men, and five Free Soilers, making a total of two hundred and thirty-three, besides four territorial delegates who could speak but not vote.* From the Whig caucus of the House many party members stayed away ; the meeting made no nominations because nominations were useless ; but it adopted a resolution to sustain the compromise settlement by nearly a unanimous vote.† The House nominees of the Democratic caucus were chosen on the first day of the session by handsome majorities,—Linn Boyd, of Kentucky, a blameless candidate, leading as Speaker on the first ballot.

The compromise measure being now laid aside by mutual assent, Congress was in a fair frame of mind—the

* Tribune Almanac, 1852.

† Thaddeus Stevens opposed that resolution single-handed.

more so now that the Presidential leap-year approached — to agitate the wrongs of Hungary. Upon this December 2^d. question the President, in his message, blended that happy mixture of friendship and prudence which befitted the case. In one passage he promised a rigid adherence to the policy of neutrality, of friendly relations with all nations and entangling alliances with none. But in another he said that the deep interest which we feel in the spread of liberal principles and the sympathy with which we witness every struggle against oppression "forbid that we should be indifferent to a case in which the strong arm of a foreign power is invoked to stifle public sentiment and repress the spirit of freedom in any country."*

It did not take long for Congress to give Louis Kossuth in the name of the people of the United States December. a cordial welcome, in due form, to the capital and the country.† Shortly before Christmas did the liberator bend his course to the national city, in recognition of this courtesy, breaking his journey at Philadelphia, where a public reception honored him at old Independence Hall. When he reached the railroad station at Washington, a committee of the Senate accosted him; and on the last day of the year, accompanied by Senator Seward, the hero called by prearrangement at the White House, where Secretary Webster presented him in form to the President. Amiable and graceful in manners, intellectual in discourse, and of polite demeanor, Kossuth, enthusiast though he was on the theme which most engrossed him, sustained well his position. President Fillmore received him with great personal respect and kindness, but with becoming reserve; and being complimented upon the sympathetic strain of his late message he took care to reply that the national policy on subjects like that referred to had been long established.‡

On the 7th of January, the holiday recess being over,

* President's message, December 2, 1851.

† Joint Resolution, December 15, 1851.

‡ Newspapers; 2 Curtis's Webster, c. 37.

the Hungarian visited both Houses of Congress 1852,
January. by formal invitation, and attended in the evening a public banquet given in his honor. The freedom of this latter feast loosened the tongues of some statesmen, who vied to say the popular thing. The Hulsemann letter, of which we shall presently speak, was what Webster stood upon, and he expressed a wish that Hungary might establish her independence. Free from all official constraint, the impulsive Cass went farther, and declared point-blank in a speech that the United States ought to interpose and prevent Russia from interfering against Hungarian independence. Douglas, an outsider also, and the cleverest presidential angler of the three, while concurring with his fellow-senator, added that he would not join Great Britain in any protest of the kind until that kingdom did justice to Ireland.

Congress, in the meantime, and more especially its rhetorical branch, the Senate, had plunged into that same embarrassing topic of expostulatory intervention; and long after Kossuth had left this cerebral city of the Union, so cordial in its hospitality, and while he January-
April. progressed westward, southward, and at length through New England and the northeast, lionized and drawing large crowds on the way, like some advance courier of the electoral menagerie of this year, whose influence was disturbing, the debate was prolonged among these marble pillars as to how far our government might interfere effectively in the political struggles of Europe without violating its cherished principles or getting drawn into danger. A discussion, at first spirited, gradually dragged and grew tedious, and at last became extinct by postponement. Resolutions offered by Cass, Seward, and others, which proposed a protest against Russian intervention, became mingled in some way with others for exhorting great Britain to release her Irish prisoners of state,—one of those last, Thomas F. Meagher, who had escaped from Van Dieman's Land, arriving at New York in time to dispute summer honors with the Magyar. Such a turn of events necessarily disconcerted those plans of

Kossuth which looked to a joint remonstrance by England and America against his country's oppressors. Bearing up well his dignity through all this fickle flood of popularity, the great exile departed for the British coast in midsummer, dismissed from our people's attention with no unkinder thought than that this splendid orator was something of a political visionary,—a bankrupt revolutionist, in fact, like so many others of those stranded Europeans whose opportune day was gone.

In close connection with this Hungarian visit was sprung a controversy with the Austrian minister which drew from Webster a despatch renowned as the "Hulsemann letter."

^{1849-51.} In June, 1849, while the issue of the Kossuth outbreak was still doubtful, President Taylor had dispatched to Vienna a special agent,* who was to watch the progress of that movement, with a view of recognizing the independence of Hungary should a government *de facto* be established. The overthrow of the revolutionists of course forbade their recognition, and our agent's report was unfavorable. But when in the following spring the secret instructions of that mission were revealed in a Presidential message and made public, Austria showed resentment. Hulsemann, the Austrian minister at Washington, made a formal remonstrance under the instruc-

^{1850,} tions of his government. The despatch came into ^{September.} Webster's hands just after he had succeeded Clayton in the portfolio of State after the death of President Taylor. Its language was severe and couched in no civil strain. The reply of our omnipotent Secretary quite demolished the remonstrant; and in a long and masterly despatch, enriched by historical allusion, those permanent principles were vindicated which the United States chose to act upon in recognizing new governments, born of successful revolution. This "Hulsemann letter," the only one, perhaps, which signalized Webster's recall to a position where diplomatic skill might in these years scour in

* A. Dudley Mann.

vain for glory, stirred the depths of American pride, as its author intended it should, at a time when sympathy with Kossuth was strongest, by boldly enunciating the grounds of American policy, and letting the people of Europe see how great a nation we were.* For the moment it looked as if a quarrel were on our hands with Austria; but the clouds passed off, and no one seemed better satisfied, as time went on, than Hulsemann himself, whose encounter with an adversary that took such pains to confute made him a celebrity of the day. Faithful to his own instructions, this chevalier returned to the charge after Webster's speech at the Kossuth banquet;† but the offence was easily smoothed over, and Austria certainly had no cause for anger with the final issue of Kossuth's tour.

The times abroad were surely not auspicious for popular revolution. With all the glory of her unexampled six months' exhibition, which brought all nations of the earth together in peaceful rivalry, Great Britain gained little that year for universal peace. Her own discontented subjects were emigrating in vast numbers, as her latest census showed, and of turbulent Ireland alone the population, through famine and removal, had fallen back to its point of twenty years before. In France, this very year, the sacred Republican cause was a second time foully betrayed by the Bonapartes; and Louis, the nephew, after successive intrigues to frustrate the law and the will of the representative assembly, which forbade his re-election as President, prolonged his authority by the bayonet and a well-planned military usurpation. France, gagged and bound, was put on the high road once more to dazzling imperialism. In Austria, under Metternich's counsel, the Emperor returned to more autoocratic rule. A German monarch was intent on suppressing "anarchy and demagogism;" Italy and Spain shut out

1852.

1851.

December.

* See 2 Curtis's Webster, c. 37. In preparing this famous despatch, Webster amplified and extended the argument upon original drafts which were furnished him by his friend Edward Everett, and by Hunter of the State department. Ib.

† Ib.; Diplomatic archives, 1852.

the light of liberal doctrines; Russia's secret police ferretted out many conspiracies. Rives, our minister at Paris, made censure in the despatches he wrote home of the methods by which Louis Napoleon made himself despot of France in violation of his vows to the Republic. When the French minister at Washington complained of these despatches as unwarrantable, an interference with the concerns which belonged to his government, our Secretary disavowed all disrespectful imputation, and requested Rives to make in Paris a like disavowal. This was not in the lofty tone of the Hulsemann letter; and Rives, pointing out the comparison, refused to retract.*

The long session of Congress, with its copious discussion and indefinite purpose, came to an end on the 31st August 31. of August. The squander of the public territory was no novelty while parties catered for popularity in a Presidential year. A wholesale donation bill of this sort which passed the House in favor of the several States failed in the Senate. But an entering wedge for private enterprises at the West was driven by an act which gave to Missouri a right of way and a tract of the public lands to aid in building railroads.† Yielding still farther to the pressure of the railway lobby which had begun in earnest, Congress voted a general right of way through the public lands.‡ Aid was given to construct a ship canal around Sault Ste. Marie. Large appropriations were made for the improvement of rivers and harbors; subsidies were voted to ocean steamers; and, perhaps, the most salutary act of the session provided for the inspection of steamboat boilers and the better security of passengers.§ It was in vain that Fillmore tried to bring about some changes in the tariff; for though courteous enough to him, this was not his Congress, nor a Whig Congress.

While Democrats inclined to criticise the President's continental policy as tame and complaisant to British

* Diplomatic Correspondence, 1852.

† Acts June 10, 1852, c. 45. ‡ Act August 4, 1852, c. 80.

§ Acts August 30, 1852, cs. 98, 106.

influence, they praised him for allaying the sectional strife at home. His annual message had urged the country to accept the compromise measures of 1850 as a finality.* A resolution of the same purport was brought up ^{April} in the House, under the lead of Jackson and Hillyer, of Georgia, and adopted by a good majority. Democrats North and South voted compactly in its favor; the Southern Whigs, too, almost unanimously; but Northern Whigs divided.†

Pending these tedious debates, party lines were drawn and the Presidential fray began. The South showed a disposition to give the electoral honors to some Northern candidate; and among the anxious aspirants from free States most had been eager to pledge fealty to the compromise settlement. That "great demoralization," as Seward afterward styled it, had already begun. Cass, among the Democrats, not content to lick the dust, rolled over and over. Congress, he proclaimed, ought not to plant an anti-slavery restriction in any territory, but leave all to the territorial legislature. Buchanan, a Democrat in retirement, exhorted a return to States rights and the old doctrines of 1798 as the true means of preserving the Union.‡ Within the Whig fold, Webster's friends were in eager motion, calling local conventions, choosing delegates like Choate, of the best ability, and determined that this time, for the last, their splendid champion should be foremost in place as well as influence. Webster himself, writing to a Virginian, reiterated his entire approbation of the compromise measures as necessary and expedient; and of the fugitive-slave act as "entirely constitutional, highly proper, and absolutely essential to the peace of the country." § But the field was not clear for the Massachusetts champion, even in his own party ranks. Winfield Scott was the express favorite of various Whig con-

* Message, December 2, 1851. † Congressional Globe.

‡ 2 Curtis's Buchanan, 22; letters to friends in Virginia and Mississippi.

§ 5 Harper, newspapers of the day.

ventions, that of Pennsylvania among the number. He had neither part nor lot in the compromise measures, and many preferred him for that very reason. And Clay, too, strong enough in his last grasp of life to dictate the candidate of the compromisers, announced his decided preference for Fillmore. The other competitors, he wrote in his "Ullman letter," had not been tried as administrators; but Fillmore had been tried "and found true, faithful, honest and scrupulous."*

The national convention of the two great parties met in June, just as the country was recuperating from the Kossuth craze. Each convention in turn was held at Baltimore, a city easily reached from the capital where Congress tarried, and convenient for political conference. The Democratic convention, first in order, occupied five days. John W. Davis, of Indiana, a former Speaker of the House, presided. The Jacksonian rule requiring two-thirds for a nominee, killed eventually the chief competitors, as in 1848, and exalted the unconspicuous. Four days were spent in fruitless balloting, Cass, Buchanan, Douglas, and Marcy being the rival aspirants. At length, on Saturday, the fifth day, and on the forty-ninth ballot General Franklin Pierce, of New Hampshire, whose previous cast had been fifty-five votes, won with 282. In a suffocating afternoon session William R. King, of Alabama, was nominated as Vice-President, and a party platform carried with little or no discussion in a wildfire of excitement, and while all were impatient to disperse, which pledged resistance to all attempts in or out of Congress at renewing the agitation of the slavery question, "under whatever shape or color;" and a determination furthermore, to "live by and adhere to" a faithful execution of the compromise settlement of 1850, the fugitive-slave act included.†

On the 16th of June followed the convention of the Whigs, vainly flattering themselves that, with no such

* Clay's Private Correspondence, 628 (March 6, 1852) Crittenden also wrote to announce his preference for Fillmore 2 Crittenden, 26.

† Newspapers of the day.

cast-iron rule, their contest among candidates would be less stubborn. John G. Chapman, of Maryland, another ex-member of the House, presided. Unlike the Democratic convention, this one, before proceeding to ballot, consumed two days in preliminary business, and a third in constructing the platform. Equivoal and prolix in expression, the Whig platform indicated how feeble, after all, was the party cohesion; for, while acquiescing in the late compromise acts as a settlement of the dangerous and exciting questions which they embraced, and deprecating and discountenancing all further agitation on the subject, the resolution, as adopted, limited the strict enforcement of these acts "until time and experience shall demonstrate the necessity of further legislation" to guard against their evasion or abuse, not impairing their present efficiency. This was a sufficient pledge of harmony for the Union's sake, but not so specific a pledge as the Democrats had given, nor one which guaranteed the fugitive-slave Act of 1850 against all possible amendment. Southern delegates perceived this and were angry, and the balloting which followed the adoption of this platform by a vote far from unanimous, showed that while the slaveholders stood by Fillmore, his own State repudiated him; and, in fact, that the delegations from the great Middle States and the West wished Scott. Webster had a small, though steady support, chiefly from New England, though some delegates from his own State were against him. Upon the first ballot Fillmore had 133, Scott 131, and Webster 29; and for fifty ballottings this remained nearly their relative strength. The friends of President and premier awaited the withdrawal of one in the other's favor; but no such courtesy came, for Webster, who was playing his last game, stood upon pride and immeasurable services; while Fillmore, as he had a right to do, upon his far greater backing.* The result of it was that rivals of the same compromising sect ex-

* Fillmore appears to have yielded to others in consenting to enter the field, and gave to a delegate from his own district written authority to withdraw his name at discretion.

hausted one another, and the convention, true to Whig prepossessions, yielded to the military candidate. On the fifty-third and decisive ballot, Winfield Scott received 159 votes, Fillmore 112, and Webster 21. Scott's nomination for President was declared unanimous. William A. Graham, of North Carolina, was quickly nominated for Vice-President, and with resolutions vainly passed to soothe the feelings of the disappointed, the Whig convention on the fifth day adjourned its bitter session, never under national auspices to meet again.*

In view of their practical concurrence, after much tribulation, upon the vexed problem of the day — and since both acquiesced in the sectional pacification of 1850, though the national Whigs were, in sentiment, hopelessly divided by it — wherein, after all, consisted now the fundamental difference between Whig and Democrat? What issue was there left between these parties upon which to conduct the present campaign? Little, we may rest assured. The intelligence and discriminating justice of the American people were flattered by both platforms; the limited scope, too, of the general government, and the reserved rights of States. But while the Whigs called still for encouragement under the tariff to American industry, for the liberal improvement of rivers and harbors, Democrats rebuked the fostering of one branch of industry to the detriment of another, and the raising of more revenue than the necessities of the government required. Nearly, then, as national parties seemed to approach one another, and devoted as both might be deemed to the idea that the people were the fountain of sovereign power, there appeared this radical diversity of sentiment concerning the appropriate sphere of government, that the Whigs looked rather to a superintending and beneficent authority, which should alleviate burdens and multiply the blessings of general intercourse, while Democrats nourished a general distrust and jealousy of all guiding authority, all patron-

* Newspapers of the day.

age, and held that national government the best which governed the least. But this "let alone" had come to be a peculiarly Southern phase of national politics ; it harmonized with the bald and slothful development of these staple-raising States, and tended above all things to place State rights foremost. The slave oligarchy, compact and fearless, gained in these years the upper hand in the Democratic party, by giving the chief honors and patronage to Northern men who could carry the populous States, and shaping the national policy to its own ends. As the reward of returning loyalty, it encouraged new conquests toward the tropics which might bring in more slave territory, and blazed with the new philanthropy which proclaimed America a white man's government. The late Democratic convention took pains to applaud the example of the Mexican War, and proclaimed the resolutions of 1797-98, without a word to counteract the mischievous construction which the Calhoun school of statesmen placed upon them. The word "Democracy" breathed magic to the poor and outcast of our Northern centres, and ignorance and iniquity flocked all the more to the same standard, the cankers of a long peace.

Whigs, on the other hand, comprised rather the moneyed class, and attracted the educated, the respectable, the outwardly virtuous. They, when in power, managed like those accustomed to handle money, and their danger was from the jobbers for favoritism, the large speculators, the subsidy seekers. But in their party ranks was necessarily more freedom to criticise, and a laxer discipline. Their national influence was strong, but less so with Southern gentlemen than they imagined it. As for conquering Cuba, Mexico, Central America, and the whole scheme of vainglorious expansion, they had no heart for it; the Union, to their minds, was large enough already.

Franklin Pierce was surely no ideal candidate for supreme office, and it was a deeper dip into the unknown for the Democracy when they fished him out for a paragon, than in their convention of 1844. He had not proved

himself great in anything. Polk, to say the least of him, had well filled one of the most conspicuous of national posts before his final call to the Presidency; while this candidate, through all his years in Congress, had shown no more than an amiable mediocrity. Nor was his record in the Mexican War remarkable; the hero who fell from his horse at Contreras and fainted at Churubusco made a feeble military figure by the side of old Chapultepec, the hero of two wars. But the negative qualities of this soldier candidate foiled well the pompous attributes of his competitor. It was strongly in his favor that he was a Northern man who pleased the South, and more strongly still, that he pleased without defining himself. Nothing that Pierce had ever said, done, or written, could be brought forward to identify him with the late truce of slavery and freedom; and the only important comment upon it which rumor preserved, was that he had once said he loathed the fugitive-slave act; that report did not hurt him in the South, but helped at the North. Amiability, in short, was easily magnified to the heroic in a canvass for popular votes, where the nobody may be held up as the friend of everybody. Pierce's nomination, as a man comparatively youthful, pleased young America, another element which neither of the great parties had been quick to recognize; and mediocrity besides, which means the majority, was flattered by such a candidacy as never before. The pen of a bosom friend, Nathaniel Hawthorne, the most original of all American men of letters, was enlisted for a campaign biography, which gave a captivating picture of the modesty, the shrinking beauty of a public life so constantly devoted to patriotism and unsullied honor. In brief, this Granite State lawyer was idealized completely. He had no bitter enemies; his smile was sweet, his manners winning. Old stagers of his party, like Marcy and Buchanan, thought well of the nomination, though they had been passed by.* There was no revolt to organize, such as hurt Cass in the former campaign; but

* 2 Curtis's James Buchanan, 38, 39.

the Democracy closed up to bear through the platform of peace and their young Apollo.

The Whig cause, on the contrary, was overcast and funereal from the start. In scarce a week from the close of their discordant convention, died Henry Clay, ^{June 29.} the founder and inspiration of that great party, prince of the Senate (to use a title of the Augustan age), and beyond whatever faults of character, a plastic moulder of national policy, an orator rich and ready, and a sympathetic leader of intelligent men, such as the world has rarely seen. The funeral escort which bore home his remains from the capital city where his last sunshine lingered made the opening procession of this Whig canvass; while a darker departure marked its close, — the death of that other leader in whom the party originated.

Daniel Webster had been in failing health, oppressed with years and the cares of office, and buoyed up chiefly by the hope of attaining the reward of his long-cherished ambition. His defeat at the Whig convention — a last defeat as he too well knew — was more than his proud spirit could bear; moreover, its circumstances, doubly mortifying from the defection of those he had served not less than of those he had deserted. He had bargained away his moral conviction for the sake of national harmony; had parted precious and life-long friendships for the sake of pacifying the slave-masters; and now these turned their backs upon him after using him for their own ends. They preferred the commonplace Fillmore, over whose administration he had poured his full resplendence. Clay, of all allies, had passed his dying word for that preference; Crittenden's cabinet influence had gone in the same direction; Fillmore, not magnanimous enough to stand aside, had consented. Webster felt that he had dragooned New England in vain. He was stunned, bewildered, unable to carry on his public tasks at the usual place or with the customary composure. To some of the Southern delegates returning home he betrayed the poignancy of his chagrin over their defection. He sought the refuge of his lonely home near the resounding surf, there to lay

himself down to die, with only nature and unchanging personal friends for his company. Some of these last would have put him before the people as an independent candidate. In the anger of his own grief he spurned Scott more disloyally than he had done Taylor; for he privately advised his friends to vote for Franklin Pierce.* He seemed willing that the Whig party should be cast into the same grave with his disappointed hopes. And thus dismissing the world with its vain strifes,

October 23. Webster breathed his last while the political battle raged fiercely in the distance; and the life of our most intellectual statesman, the man of heaviest brain and most kingly aspect, ebbed out with the neighboring tide. Nothing that he uttered in his last hours indicates that what he had done for fraternal peace, that the success of those compromise measures which at length seemed positive, brought him consoling thoughts, serene tranquillity at the last. Whether he closed his eyes in the full conviction that he had done right only eternity can reveal. Webster died the victim of personal disappointment. He still lives in American memory, and deserves to live, as statesman, orator, and exemplar of the national sentiment, as champion of the Union against all disloyal heresy. Yet his image and memory are likely to endure in generations to come, as the image and memory of one who, with all his colossal endowments, was very human. Nature was always stronger with him than the arts of discipline; and this Achilles of our civil life, dipped early into the Styx of national politics, had yet his vulnerable part.

These deaths of illustrious leaders—and particularly June—November. the latter and less expected one—cast a pall over the Whig canvass, presaging disastrous defeat. Soldier though he was, and fallible in polities, Winfield Scott typified the best courage that still remained among the Free State Whigs. Party presses like the *Boston Atlas*, *Albany Journal*, and *New York Tribune*, while

* See 2 *Curtis's Webster*, c. 38.

leaving the late pacification to stand honorably, and disposed to do all that was denominated in the bond, would not glorify the compact nor vaunt it as their handiwork. They contended, like Scott's chief supporters, that the compromise measures were not Whig measures *per se*, but arranged by Whigs and Democrats in temporary unison. In Scott's letter of acceptance, which, on the whole, was handsomely expressed, condemning all injurious agitation, that compromise received no explicit comment, July. but he simply accepted his nomination "with the resolutions annexed." Upon the heels of that letter came a manifesto, signed by seven Southern Whigs in Congress, — by Stephens and Toombs among them,* Unionists upon condition, — which announced that they would not support a nominee who had withheld from the compromise settlement the approval of his judgment. Unfortunately for countervailing such a defection, the Free Soilers would not accept Scott's candidacy, but held at Pittsburgh August 11. a convention of their own party, where John P. Hale and George W. Julian were made their standard-bearers.

An American novel, in two volumes, which first appeared as a serial in an anti-slavery newspaper, came out this summer in book form, pushing in time to an unprecedented sale, in the United States alone, of more than three hundred thousand sets, besides being republished and translated abroad. This was "Uncle Tom's Cabin," from the pen of Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe, a gifted woman belonging to a gifted Northern family. Vividly delineating for the first time our Southern plantation life, with its lights and shadows, a work of fiction penetrated the sympathies of a vast community, whose ears had been stopped to the jarring recital of unpleasant facts. The tears shed over faithful Tom, the black bondsman, and angel Eva, swelled the gulf which isolated our Southern States from the century's civilization.

Dignity, at least, was given to the position of this Free

* Stephens drew up this paper. Johnston's A. H. Stephens, p. 268.

Soil minority that spurned concessions of principle. And between their rebuke for cringing too much and that of Union-savers for cringing too little, the Scott Whigs fared badly. Nothing in truth damaged Northern Whigs so seriously as the crepuscular gleam by which shone their moral convictions as they flattered themselves upon their delicate power to manipulate the minds of both sections. They were grown timorous as the hare about shibboleths; tests and provisos were odious to them, whether Wilmot or anti-Wilmot.* Scott, moreover, had good reason to complain of competitors who went into convention with him and then would not abide by results. His later memoirs recall Fillmore's cold indifference to the regular nominee, and Webster's action, besides, as though he had been cheated out of an inheritance.† The truth was, that while the grand pacification bound up the Democrats firmly, it rent the Whig party irreparably asunder.

The splendid hero of Chippewa, Churubusco, and Chapultepec did his best to win in the new campaign. He avoided personal quarrels, and was even somewhat solicitous to pick up cheap votes. But he was not proof against that worst of political weapons, ridicule. Some trivial and careless expressions of tongue and pen, like that earlier one of the "hasty plate of soup,"‡ were used grotesquely to his injury. His superb self-confidence and egotism blinded him to pitfalls. Journeying in early autumn to the West, ostensibly to fix the site of a military hospital, but really to see and be seen by the common voters, he praised in speeches on the route the "rich old Irish brogue," and the "German foreign accent," laying on the blarney quite plentifully. Thurlow Weed, the Warwick of the party, who had but lately returned from Europe disgusted and sick at heart with the Fillmore policy, looked forward with apprehension to an interview which Scott had arranged with him upon his return. But there was no embarrassment whatever. For the

* See 2 Coleman's Crittenden, 36.

† 2 Scott's Memoirs, 596.

‡ *Supra*, p. 9.

Whig chieftain needed no information, no opinions; but brimmed all over with health and spirits, and looked buoyantly forward to an easy political victory.*

Under the greatest American soldier of the age, albeit a sad miscalculator in politics, the Whig party — or that remnant which remained faithful to regular nominees — marched to a Waterloo defeat. Pierce, the fainting hero, overwhelmed the proud conqueror of the Montezumas. His popular majority was considerable; he swept the electoral votes in all the thirty-one States of the Union save four, and won the Presidency by two hundred and fifty-four votes against Scott's forty-two.† South and North, West and East, joined in preferring the Democratic candidates; while Scott and Graham carried but two of the slave States, Kentucky and Tennessee, and two of the free, Massachusetts and Vermont. The first November 2. Tuesday's sun of November went down upon a shattered and discomfited national party never more to rally, but destined to disperse in local fragments, and then melt into the yeasty waves as completely as Federalism before it. Whiggery, it is true, had been less patrician, less distrustful of the people than Federalism; but the Federalists in their day accomplished much for history that was permanent, while the Whigs — crushed under the incessant weight of unparalleled misfortunes — left nothing. The drift of American polities, in spite of the best navigators, had been to sectional strife; and for guidance through such dangers, the Whigs had proved too humane to steer in the one direction and too faint-hearted to take the other. The party fell by dissension and by its terrible propensity to misfortunes; and its epitaph must be that it loved the Union as it was and sought sincerely to preserve it.

It was observable that the Free Soil party, though large enough to reduce Pierce's vote to a plurality in Connecticut and Ohio, and make his majority very close in New York, Michigan, and some other free States, won no distinctive

* 2 Thurlow Weed's Memoirs, 218.

† See Tables, Appendix.

victory. Vermont struggled hard against that element to give the Whigs the full benefit of an anti-slavery poll; while Massachusetts, under like difficulties, brought in its Whig governor Clifford only by a plurality, and the legislature had to intervene before the coalitionists were finally defeated. Truckling did the Whigs no good in New York State. Washington Hunt being renominated governor after he had taken pains to deify the fugitive-slave "fanaticism," Horatio Seymour, the nominee of the Democrats, was chosen over him by a very large majority.

As for the "National Union party," that grand Salvation army of 1850, it was swallowed up in the maw of the successful Democracy, to which from henceforth the South confided the terms of its allegiance. The slave States, it must be owned, gave the new truce of sections fair play. South Carolina, in spite of politicians who harped still upon secession, plumped for Pierce and King the electoral vote of its legislature. In Mississippi Jefferson Davis had already left Quitman's set mouthing its finalities which no man regarded, and entered the Presidential canvass under Pierce's banner. But Foote's Union party was pushed to the wall, and Foote wandered a political exile to other States.* What, on the whole, Pierce's election meant more than anything else was that the people were heartily sick of all anti-slavery turbulence and wished forgetfulness. And the platform of Pierce's party gave assurance to the State rights men of the South that Southern ideas and Southern policy might yet advance further under the old flag and a national administration of the old Democracy.

Congress met in final session on the 6th of December,
^{December 6.} and while the final outcome of this new political upheaval was the universal theme of discussion. One thing was certain, that the national Whig party had perished with its two great founders. President Fillmore's temperate and well-written message served as the funeral

* Alfriend's Jefferson Davis, c. 5; John A. Quitman's Life, c. 17.

oration. It eulogized Webster, whose vacant place in the cabinet was now filled by his friend and fellow-citizen, Edward Everett.

Nothing notable could come from this flabby and commonplace Congress. Its disposition continued, as in the longer session, to play the spread-eagle with foreign relations and talk without coming to a point. And the chief scene of forensic dispute was still the Senate chamber, where David R. Atchison, of Missouri, was President *pro tempore*, in place of William R. King. For the Vice-President elect had resigned that post because of feeble health, and travelled in the vain hope of recuperating for his new position. Here Cass and Douglas, Northern Democrats, contended for the privilege of ushering the new administration into fresh fields of diplomacy which meant the aggrandizement of the slave power.

Cass opened the way with a diatribe upon the government for what he called its pusillanimous indifference to the wrongs of Hungary; nor this alone, but because it failed to sympathize with Cuban efforts for independence. Mason, of Virginia, had proposed a call upon the Executive for copies of a correspondence between England, France, and the United States relating to a tripartite convention guaranteeing the possession of Cuba to Spain. This passed, and the correspondence called for 1853. was in January submitted to the Senate. It January-February. showed that a tripartite convention of this kind had, indeed, been drafted, to which France assented, and Crampton, the English minister, asked the further approval of the United States. This convention bound the contracting parties to "disclaim, now and forever hereafter, all intention to obtain possession of the island of Cuba," and to discountenance all attempts to that effect on the part of any power or individual whatever. Everett's letter declining the arrangement was written soon after his accession to the portfolio of State; it alleged that such a convention could never be ratified by our Senate nor be made acceptable to our people, and rested with still

greater emphasis upon the inequality of a league whose purport was to divest France and England of what was distant, while it compelled this country to be self-denying as to an island at its very door, whose peaceful acquisition, under conditions not wholly impossible, ought not to be refused. Everett's despatch suited the prevailing temper of our people, and most of all the Southern temper. Cass, however, was for pursuing this subject farther. Moving a call for the Nicaragua treaty which Squier had negotiated,* and an inquiry what steps the Senate ought to take respecting the interpretation of the Clayton-Bulwer treaty, he brought up for discussion the whole embarrassing question of European intervention on the western continent; and he offered two resolutions for adoption which embodied the latest and most advanced views of the "Monroe Doctrine." He reiterated his wish that this country should acquire Cuba, though not until the Cubans had achieved their own independence. Later in the debate Douglas delivered his speech, going beyond Cass in the zeal of annexation to the southward. He opposed the Cass resolutions, not because of the principle they asserted about European colonization hereafter, but because they implied concessions he was unwilling to make. This government had gone too far in compliance with the plans of other nations: the Clayton-Bulwer treaty violated the Monroe principle, and for his part he repudiated the notion that it was necessary or proper for the United States to disavow any intent of seizing upon the island of Cuba. This subject drew forth further remarks in the Senate, but no vote was taken.†

Pending this discussion, signs appeared that the British ministry were disposed to pacify this country on the Central American situation. Mason, from the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, on the 11th of February, made a judicious report as to what the Clayton-Bulwer treaty properly meant. A message to the House from the President about a week later, announced that

* *Supra*, p. 175.

† *Congressional Globe*.

Great Britain proposed a revision of the Central-American treaty, expressing her willingness to go as far as possible in placing her relations with the United States on a satisfactory basis. Less than a year had passed since Joseph R. Ingersoll, of Philadelphia, was appointed and confirmed as minister to London, succeeding Abbott Lawrence, who had asked to be recalled. A man of highly respectable antecedents, Ingersoll was greeted in England with flattering marks of respect; but the defeated administration he served could negotiate nothing, nor, we may add, did the next that succeeded it unravel the skein. Involved in this British entanglement was the question of American fishery rights off Newfoundland under the convention which followed the treaty of Ghent.

Douglas, the "little giant," was in full prime and vigor, a fair aspirant for future Presidential honors could he but have laid aside the demagogue and kept true to his best promptings. But it was melancholy to see the aged and tremulous Cass, born in the same year with Daniel Webster, assuming, with gouty step, to lead on the Southern fire-eaters, and spouting these silly filibustering speeches without merit or force. Such vaporings in our Senate were all the more disgraceful since the Queen of Spain had released all the American captives of the ill-starred Lopez expedition, ninety of whom landed together in New York some ten months before.

Fillmore's conduct of affairs abroad, had, at all events, been prudent and honorable in this respect: he had not, to quote his own phrase, mistaken change for progress, or the invasion of others' rights for national glory.* And he left our relations with all foreign powers friendly, our rights respected, and our high place in the family of nations cheerfully recognized. Yet his administration, with all the superb talent it employed in the State Department, achieved in diplomacy but very little. The Mexican Congress had rejected a painstaking convention for

* President's message, December 6, 1852.

opening a railway route across the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, fearing that the grant of such favors might end in a new dismemberment of her territory.* Corresponding efforts in the region of Nicaragua fared scarcely better. In fact, the Clayton-Bulwer treaty, at first hailed with delight by our citizens, was soon found to fall short of its anticipated purpose.† The first and natural impression of that treaty among Americans had been that the Monroe Doctrine was so far applied by it as to restrain both the United States and Great Britain from ever occupying, fortifying, colonizing, or exercising dominion over any part of Central America; in other words, that self-denial on our part as to future conquest was offset by Great Britain's recession from whatever pretensions she had of late set up in that region. Those pretensions consisted in exercising an alleged protectorate over a mixed and miserable brood of Indians and negroes, having no laws, religion, or written language, whose dusky sovereignty along what was known as the "Mosquito coast" was said to include the entire Atlantic shore from Lake Honduras to the boundary of New Grenada; thus comprising within these limits the mouth of the river San Juan and the port of Greytown, which was the natural Atlantic terminus of the proposed canal. The chief and almost the entire population of Nicaragua dwelt at this time about the Pacific shore. The Clayton-Bulwer treaty used ambiguous language, and Great Britain, from her inveterate habit of construing all doubtful stipulations in her own favor, claimed that her Mosquito shore protectorate was not therein renounced, but only new settlements in the future. Whether Clayton had purposely avoided the delicate point, hoping to catch Bulwer upon the phraseology and gain, is not quite clear; but Cass, Chase, and other senators vehemently declared, when difficulty arose, that they never would have voted to ratify that treaty

* See 2 Curtis's Webster, c. 37, in this connection, regarding Mexico's annulment of the Garay franchise of 1842, which had since passed into the hands of American citizens.

† *Supra*, p. 176.

had they not understood that it put an end to this Mosquito coast protectorate and all British pretensions in that region, present or future.* President Fillmore and the Whigs did little to unravel this difficulty, which soon became entangled by a quarrel between Nicaragua and Costa Rica, independent sovereignties of Central America, over their respective boundaries. Southern expansionists, State rights Democrats, and all who wished to plant the stars and stripes in the Southern quarter of this continent, complained that Webster had courted British interests and, like Clayton, departed from the Monroe Doctrine.

The chief merit of Fillmore's foreign policy lay unquestionably in doubling that dangerous headland to which Hungarian sympathy drifted the people. But among various minor enterprises of Whig diplomacy, the Japanese expedition of 1852, under command of Commodore Perry, deserves a passing mention. Our new settlements of California and Oregon had greatly enlarged commercial intercourse with eastern Asia, and the recent application of steam to ocean navigation demanded new coaling stations and facilities. It was desirable to take a new step towards encircling the world in intercourse by establishing a line of ocean steamers to ply the Pacific between California and the celestial empire. To facilitate all this, coaling facilities were quite desirable for the ports of Japan; and the relaxation besides of that inhospitable treatment which the Japanese empire had manifested to American sailors shipwrecked upon its isolated coast. Of the results of Perry's expedition we shall speak in another chapter.

The Whig management of internal affairs had been prudent and successful. The balance-sheet of the Treasury at Fillmore's retirement was unexpectedly favorable. The actual debt of the United States on the 1st of

* See debates, January, 1851, etc. Clayton fortified himself with documents tending to prove the correctness of Bulwer's assertion and on his return to the Senate defended his negotiation.

January, 1853, was reported at \$65,131,000, including the obligations of the Mexican War and the late compromise, which pressed heavily upon the party in power. Six millions in public stocks had been delivered to Texas to quiet her demands upon New Mexico, and five millions more were deliverable later. This brought us close to the turnpike of reduction. The last instalment to Mexico had been paid under the treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, and the awards to American citizens besides, under the same treaty.* Cheap postage had caused a deficit in the postal revenues; but with imports and the increased sale of public land, of which more than eight million acres had been surveyed and brought into market during the last twelve months, the total net receipts reached a handsome sum. There had been Indian troubles in Florida and on the Mexican border of our new frontiers, but none of serious concern. Our navy scoured all parts of the navigable globe in the interest of American commerce, which expanded rapidly; and besides that to Japan, national expeditions had been fitted out to the China seas, Behring Straits, the African coast, and those important countries of this western hemisphere watered by the rivers Amazon and La Plata. The executive bureaus, under efficient management, moved without friction; and the new Department of the Interior, well occupied with its practical concerns, had relieved the State Department of superfluous drudgery that it might fulfil its more dignified functions.

Fillmore's important appointments, after once surrounding himself with the able circle of advisers commended by Clay, had not been many. William A. Graham, his Secretary of the Navy, who left the cabinet to share Scott's misfortunes on the national ticket, was succeeded by John P. Kennedy of Maryland, a man who combined politics with lighter pursuits of the pen; and that department, already presided over by Paulding and Bancroft, was becoming the literary corner, so to speak, of the

* Treasury Report, 1852; Ex. Docs.

American cabinet. Besides Everett's translation to the post of Webster, where native scholarship bore rather upon the oratory of commemorative occasions, Nathan K. Hall (afterward a district judge) had turned over the concerns of the post office to Samuel D. Hubbard, of Connecticut, a representative of some experience. All these cabinet changes were made in 1852. Somewhat earlier the Supreme Bench received an able associate in Benjamin R. Curtis, of Massachusetts, whose choice occurred almost simultaneously to the President and Secretary Webster, upon the death of Justice Woodbury.* Another accidental vacancy in the same court, Fillmore would have filled by George E. Badger, a relic of the Harrison cabinet, had not the Senate failed to confirm, and thus carried the selection to a Democratic President, as happened in every instance of this kind but one from the entrance of the Jackson dynasty into power down to the Civil War.

Millard Fillmore left supreme office with this wide-ranged Union flourishing and to all appearances tranquil. At home, as he could fairly claim, Americans enjoyed an amount of happiness, public and private, such as probably had never fallen to the lot of another people,—of happiness, in which great multitudes, unlike all precedents from the old world, felt the right to participate. In closing his Presidential term, he claimed to have done no more than to discharge its duties to the best of his humble abilities and with a single eye to the public good.† It would be invidious to deny to one called so suddenly and so unexpectedly to terrible responsibilities so modest a meed of public gratitude. Congress, though not in political sympathy with him, rendered perfunctory homage. Some of Fillmore's friends contributed to make him a life member of the American Colonization Society, whose annual meeting he had attended this winter, when Everett, his premier, for whom

* See 2 Curtis's Webster, c. 37.

† See President's message, Dec. 6, 1852.

the Whigs of Massachusetts were arranging a seat in the Senate, held forth in unctuous and over-sanguine strain. In acknowledging the honor thus conferred upon him, the retiring Executive indorsed the plan of the Society as the only rational one in his estimation for ameliorating the condition of our colored race. In official utterances he had thrice blessed already the compromise of 1850 as the final reconciliation of slavery and freedom. Benedictions flowed down this last of ruling Whigs, like the oil on Aaron's beard and skirts, as he stepped back to the grade of private citizen. In the hour of parting salutation, the members of his cabinet, dignified and able men, certified in writing to his uniform courtesy, and their high appreciation of his services and personal character. Could bland appreciation of this kind fix Fillmore's seat among the permanent benefactors of mankind? His administration had been instrumental to the allied purposes of that noble pair, Clay and Webster, who, in their lives, made Presidents, though they were none. He himself originated in office nothing that was accomplished, and accomplished nothing but what others originated. Fillmore's personal followers were not among the boldest, the soundest, the clearest sighted of the free States, but rather among the timid and obsequious. Such friends he preferred in the patronage, and was chieftain of the "silver grays." This handsome personage, whose deportment was excellent and upon whom so many looked for the next few years as the surviving associate of buried giants and the last type of Washingtonian polities, law, order, and high respectability, saw actually into the national situation about as far as one might hold out his hand before his eyes; and by that same length of measurement must be bounded his permanent fame. This statesman of national sobriety did not gain the good will of slavery except at the cost of that section and the great Empire State with which he was identified. Zachary Taylor might have risked too much by his temerity; but Fillmore, by a prudent surrender, perhaps

inevitable under the distressful circumstances which attended his succession, lost caste forever with philanthropy. In putting his sanction to the fugitive-slave act, as a man of Northern birth, he doomed himself and the Whig party together. "I pity Fillmore," wrote one who knew him as a fellow-citizen; "timid, vacillating, credulous, unjustly suspicious when approached by his prejudices, he has allowed (rather than accomplished) the sacrifice of that confiding party which has had no honors too high to confer upon him."*

It was natural enough that politicians who regarded the great compromise less as a resting-stone than a new landmark of departure should have turned to the rising sun. The amiable President-elect reached the national capital soon after the official count which confirmed his title. The reserve with which he shrouded his cabinet selections enhanced the praise which went out spontaneously to one upon whom the popular fancy built extravagant hopes. Pierce's health at this time was far from strong; and, suffering at heart from a recent family bereavement, his disposition was to shun needless publicity. The office-seeking horde of Democrats was already in voracious motion. To avoid its pestering attentions, he rode from Baltimore to Washington city in a baggage car, preserving a strict incognito; and when the train rolled into its dingy depot, he sprang out upon the platform so completely disguised with an old coat and hat, and a handkerchief which muffled his face, that even personal friends, on the lookout, failed to recognize him. Passing through the crowd of cormorant patriots, whose eyes were turned eagerly in the wrong direction, and who nearly knocked him down in their jostling anxiety, he hailed a hackman and was in his quarters at Willard's Hotel, quite unmolested, before the committee-men at the railroad station could

* Hamilton Fish's letter (1851); 2 Thurlow Weed's Life, 196.

quite convince themselves that he had escaped. For the next ten days he kept the place-hunters at bay, pleading indisposition in excuse, and rising higher and higher in public estimation ; the leaders he really wished to see paying private visits upon his personal invitation. He looked sick and weary, tired already of public honors before he had actively assumed them.

The early days of March saw the influx of great crowds from all parts of the Union, among whom the axe-grinders of party predominated as usual.

March. On capitol hill our dilatory Solons, frightened at the near prospect of an extra session, applied their united strength to move on the huge gathering snow-ball of heterogeneous legislation,—members trying to tack this pet measure and that to the last appropriation bills, whose fate hung doubtful between the two

March 4. Houses. On Friday morning, March 4, Congress was tugging its last, the responsible majority of the respective Houses nearly worn out with fatigue after an all-night session. Precisely at the stroke of noon the indispensable work was finished, and the thirty-second Congress hurrying out of doors whilst undergoing a transformation process, not unlike that of the glass slipper heroine at the last midnight chime, the spell of its illusion came to an end. The flags on both wings of the capitol were at once run down, but that of the Senate mounted again immediately to hail the birth of a new administration.

The chief impression of national progress under these four years of Whig administration is derived from the

1849-1853. vast impetus given to our carrying enterprise by land and water. As the national sequel of those immense accessions of territory we had gained on the western watershed of the Rocky Range, with Oregon gently absorbing a population of farmers, and with California inundated since the gold discoveries by a mighty flood of the world's adventurers, this broad, blue Pacific, before so solitary, was cut by the keel

and paddles of American vessels, and the harbor of ten sails became quickly the rendezvous for many hundreds. Hence came earnest conceptions of new links of traffic for circumnavigating the globe. Hence, too, the liberal subsidies to our commerce; the impulse to Japanese and other naval expeditions; the various abortive treaties for securing rights of way over Tehuan-tepec, Nicaragua, and the Isthmus; and the steadily growing pressure of a Washington lobby for railway grants out of the public lands, and rival moonshine enterprises at the far West, all feeders to the premature system of a Pacific railway, spanning this whole continent, for which capitalists asked a liberal loan of the national credit.

In this latest session of Congress, an exploration was authorized at the public cost, in order to ascertain the most practicable and economical route for a Pacific railway.* Some wanted this immense undertaking prosecuted wholly by the United States; some proposed selling the franchise to the highest bidders. A transcontinental telegraph line was a companion project. And all the time our distant El Dorado was drawing closer to the Union by the ligature of isthmus communication; for news scarcely nineteen days old came from California to New York this final winter of Fillmore's term by a new route through Acapulco and Vera Cruz.† Whigs, as a party, had identified themselves with liberal and even lavish appropriations for traffic development, as well as for river and harbor improvement; and in New York State, their superfluous energy in expending the public moneys to enlarge the Erie canal did much towards their party downfall; for here the courts overturned their legislation as unconstitutional, and Horatio Seymour, the new Democratic governor, officially declared that they had left the finances of the State in bad condition.

These, as we have seen, were days of ocean racing, when our subsidized Collins line showed swifter speed than the

* Act March 3, 1853, c. 98.

† Newspapers, February, 1853.

soggy British Cunarders. It was high time for Congress to interfere, as it did, for the official inspection of steam boilers;* for, indeed, the carelessness of American steam carriers, had in their competition become gross and criminal. A Hudson River steamboat, the "Henry Clay," which ran down stream from Albany on a July day in 1852, kept up a race with a rival craft, carrying for that purpose an immense head of steam. Passengers remonstrated in vain that the boat had become so overheated by the large fires at the engine that they could hardly pass from stem to stern. In the afternoon, while opposite Yonkers, the steamboat caught fire and was run ashore; more than seventy persons, among whom were citizens of high distinction, perishing by drowning or in flames. Other catastrophes of the kind, even more disastrous, were due to the recklessness of steamboat officers.

The rapid increase of crime, pauperism, and misrule was already perceptible at our large centres, supplying one of the most difficult problems for self-government to solve. New York city, that sieve of immigration on the Atlantic side, kept the dregs of that polluted influx from the old world, which, if properly spread over our national surface might have fertilized and blessed. Whigs, though respectable, had not redeemed its civic management while recently in power; its government, under whatever party control, continued corrupt, venal, rotten to the core. City councillors sold their influence to a horse-railroad company; they were in league with gamblers, pimps, rumsellers, and the vilest procurers of purchasable votes. Municipal expenses increased over 30 per cent in a single year; and the comptroller showed in his report of 1853 that the annual cost of governing this profligate city was only a trifle less than the ordinary annual cost of supporting the whole thirty-one States. So vile was the condition of the streets that a down-town hatter, who offered and undertook for a time to keep Broadway swept at his personal cost, advertised

* *Supra*, p. 238.

well his wares as well as his public spirit. Somewhat later, in 1854, Fernando Wood was elected mayor. His antecedents were doubtful; and yet so efficiently, so zealously did he take up the besom of reform that good citizens of all politics hailed his rising star, until he, too, was found insincere with the rest. Public co-operation in reforms was difficult. Millionnaires toiled with the muck-rake or sported the foppish cane; doing little, in comparison with their means, for the public benefaction. A scathing article in *Putnam's Monthly* (the best specimen of a literary magazine then evolved in America) exposed New York's "best society" as empty, frivolous, unworthy, because it had no aims beyond luxury, indolence, and the avoidance of responsibility. And yet the great money-brain of this metropolis revolved stupendous plans for material improvement. The Drummond light which beamed by night from Barnum's museum, at the corner opposite the Astor House and sedate St. Paul's, set Whig presses inquiring why New York streets might not be illuminated by something brighter than gas. And midway in the nineteenth century the three ideas over which the Knickerbockers pondered were a bridge to Brooklyn, an underground railway, and the lighting of Broadway with Drummond lights.*

A more lurid and singular picture of American municipal life was beheld in San Francisco, the chosen bivouac of as wild, disorderly, and incongruous a herd as ever collected without constraint of handcuffs, or military discipline. Three extraordinary trials did San Francisco experience in these years, and so did Sacramento and the lesser cities besides: fires, lynch-law, and the advent of the Chinamen. In the first year of helter-skelter settlement, fire after fire broke out in the golden gate city; and millions of tangible property were licked up in the flames. May 3d, 1851, the anniversary day of the first of those great conflagrations, saw still another, which swept the precious acres where business lodged, consuming fifteen hundred buildings and

* Newspapers of the day.

inflicting a new loss of twelve million dollars. Much of this combustion was of wooden structures meanly wrought; but stores were destroyed of costlier material, in one of which, vainly vaunted as fire-proof, six persons lingered to fight the element, and the iron doors and shutters became so expanded by the heat that they were imprisoned and burned to death. New blocks, still better built, sprang up from such embers like magic; but six great fires occurred within two years, most, if not all of which, were incendiary. The next step was to organize a vigilance committee for suppressing criminal outrage upon person or property by prompt and efficient means. For San Francisco by this time was known to be the headquarters of organized malefactors, of convicts from Botany Bay, of desperadoes from all parts of the globe, who were banded together for robbery and plunder, and ready to commit arson or even murder in furtherance of their plans. The machinery of local government was not yet adequate for preserving the peace; politicians were a riff-raff set; the judicial apparatus moved clumsily. Substantial citizens of the place organized accordingly, to take justice temporarily into their own hands. As a vigilance committee, they hired a room where certain of their number were in attendance day and night. Whenever an offence came to notice which required their general intervention a bell clanged from the belfry. The legislature of the State had, about the same time, made grand larceny a capital offence. On the 10th of June, 1851, a British convict was arrested in San Francisco while in the act of carrying off a stolen safe; he was brought before the vigilance committee, tried, found guilty, and sentenced to be hanged; and that same night the culprit was swung off in the public square. A coroner's inquest identified nine members of the committee as directly concerned in this execution; but at once a card was published, bearing nearly two hundred names, whose signers avowed that they, as members of the vigilance committee, were equally implicated with the nine. The organization extended its operations, adding good citizens as members, all of whom were pledged to

secret co-operation. Notorious rogues received peremptory orders to depart; vessels entering the port from English penal settlements were boarded, and escaped convicts were refused permission to land. The committee established a central office with branches, arranged a patrol, replenished their funds by subscription. Men charged with minor offences were handed over to the civil authorities; but the committee kept the more heinous offenders to themselves so as to enhance the spectacle of terror to evil-doers.

Not many weeks elapsed before a Sidney convict named Stewart was brought before this tribunal on a charge of robbery, and proved, as he afterwards confessed, to be the leader of a gang of infamous scoundrels. Sentence was passed upon him; the bell tolled to summon good citizens; the unhappy prisoner was brought out from his confinement pinioned and guarded, and marched to the improvised gallows, under the escort of more than five hundred members of the secret fraternity; he was hanged by the neck in broad daylight in presence of a great crowd of spectators who offered neither tumult nor resistance. More proofs were shown of the terrible energy of these self-organized police and protectors of society, before they finally left the courts and executive officials to exercise with proper nerve the usual functions of law. Rude justice like this, both in San Francisco and Sacramento, marked the early development of a society in which dominated the American motive of self-preservation and the protection of honest fruits of industry above all literal obstacles. When the civil arm was strong enough and honorable enough to deal justly, such temporary tribunals disappeared, leaving a lesson which all misgoverned cities should heed.

The third experience of San Francisco was with the Chinese and a heathen Asiatic immigration,—a problem of grave difficulty, which cannot to this day be considered as finally solved. The spring of 1852 brought thousands of the cheap celestials across the Pacific to California, and so multitudinous was their swarm as already to excite much apprehension and breed various proposals for their

wholesale exclusion. The 4th of July celebration that year at San Francisco was marked by the attendance of a large body of them in procession, with richly decorated banners of mysterious hieroglyphics. A race of voluntary immigrants so incomprehensible, so unassimilating, so completely exotic to the Anglo-American in ideas and morals, had never before been cast upon these shores. We welcomed the oppressed who sought this broad continent to participate in its blessings, to grow into trustworthy citizens; but the Mongolian seemed cunningly to set his minute and toilsome ingenuity against ours, and to carry back a competence to his native land, like a locust, at our loss. Governor Bigler, a Democrat, brought this subject in 1852 before the California legislature in a special message which pressed the necessity of restraining such immigration; and most of all, that of the "coolies," so-called, who came over the seas under contracts to labor for a specified time and then return home. China could export millions of her prolific and poverty-stricken population, without feeling the loss; while their presence in this country as economizers upon the merest pittance, created a ruinous competition with those who were Americans in the sympathetic sense, and degraded labor far below our accepted standard of living.

Within this brief Whig era those steamships ceased to be a novelty which bore to Atlantic ports from California millions in gold dust and minted coin. Agriculture in this highly-favored region diverted some attention from the mines and the wide-spread gambling spirit. Hither came hard-fisted men from the older States to better their fortunes, politicians among the rest. California, as we have seen, soon gave her hand to the rough diamond Democracy. Fremont and the Whigs were discarded, while Gwin, from Mississippi, kept a steady influence. A rising man here in politics was Broderick, who had bossed a fire-engine in New York city, his former home, and whose father, a stone-cutter at Washington, had, it was said, dressed some of those stony pillars in the chamber where his son was destined to sit as senator,

Other regions embraced in our new national acquisitions flourished during these years. The colonizing work went on in Oregon, aided by a coastwise intercourse with San Francisco; but heavy snow-storms disheartened the pioneer, whose sufferings were great from cold and hunger. The Columbia divided public sentiment in this territory; and there was already an inclination shown to form distinct States north and south of that river. Into Texas had set a fair stream of immigration from the Old World, chiefly from Germany; and Houston and Galveston were rival emporiums of trade. Utah drew Mormon proselytes from distant lands; and near the sacred city at Salt Lake, bloomed rich valleys under cultivation. Brigham Young, upon whom the college of twelve apostles had set the full seal of leadership after the death of Smith, administered at discretion the temporalities of the church, and after President Fillmore appointed him territorial governor, he exerted unbounded influence.

A new agitation took its rise in these years which made decided progress in spite of ridicule. "Woman's rights" was its subject, or the enlargement of that sphere of worldly activity to which custom and masculine opinion had long confined the gentler sex. It was kindled by the spirit of individual freedom, whose spread characterized both British and American society. Our first woman's rights convention met at Rochester, New York, in the autumn of 1848, under the auspices of Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, both married women of American birth, who had already espoused the philanthropic cause of the negro, and attended the world's anti-slavery convention at London. At this and later gatherings of the kind, suffrage was demanded for woman on the principle that taxation without representation was tyranny; reform too, in the more equal employment of sexes in the trades and professions, besides greater freedom and advantage to the wife in the laws relating to marriage and conjugal property. This movement, in the United States at least, took

some hue from the crusade for negro emancipation, a cause in which woman saw or fancied a parallel to her own condition; and like our Northern abolitionists, with whom the self-chosen preachers of the fair inclined to fraternize, they threw down the gauntlet to society and the Christian church, and preferred conspicuousness to positive influence. "Bloomerism" realized, in 1852, the exaggeration of this feminine tendency to make both sexes alike, when some of the advanced reformers — and those neither the youngest nor the most comely — walked the streets with short kilts and Turkish trousers, in token of the solemn mission they were bound to fulfil. American prints and the London *Punch* made sport of the new costume, and woman's good taste and abundant prudery soon banished the grotesque spectacle. Tennyson's "Princess" preserves the prejudices which men of refinement entertained in these years for woman's striving to run with men the open race of human ambition. Not only co-equal suffrage, but the co-equal pursuit of business was for the present hindered by more absorbing questions. But the sexual agitation, confining its scope more closely to marriage equality, produced greater laxity in the divorce laws of our several States; and, more than this, after New York in 1849 had set a strong example, wholly revolutionized in the course of twenty years the common law which merged the wife for the time being in her husband, by statutes, which at length prevail in every State, recognizing in a greater or less degree her separate existence and independent rights of contract and property. Whatever woman herself truly asks, male legislators have shown themselves quite ready to grant her. But the grant of co-equality in public affairs will be the last to accord; so contrary is it to human experience, and to woman's own instinct to make the home and social life her sphere of influence. Nature, perhaps, will prove stronger than all laws to solve the permanent relations of the sexes who were created for mutual comfort and not rivalry.

Allied to the woman's movement was that of temperance. And we may now observe the cause which had made so

splendid an advance under the organized influence of moral suasion, entering State politics to become a party issue and a regulator of affairs. Neal Dow, a temperance reformer of the Pine Tree State, was author and prime mover of what was long known as the "Maine liquor law," first put into operation in that State in 1851, which prohibited the sale of intoxicating drinks under heavy penalties. The controversy over stringent legislation like this affected the elections of the following years here and in various other parts of the Union; and a contest was precipitated between legislative license and legislative prohibition which has been waged at intermission ever since.

CHAPTER XXI.

ADMINISTRATION OF FRANKLIN PIERCE.

SECTION I.

PERIOD OF THIRTY-THIRD CONGRESS.

MARCH 4, 1853—MARCH 3, 1855.

OUR nation's capital was full of eager life on the day when Franklin Pierce became President. The weather ^{1853.} was variable; snow fell in large flakes during ^{March 4.} the morning, but towards noon the storm ceased, there were symptoms of clearing weather, and the sun peeped warily out. Drums had been beaten since daylight, as the wakeful military and fire-engine companies moved about in various directions. The crowd of superfluous visitors which makes Washington a populous city on these quadrennial dates, increased by thousands with the arrival of each morning train; while pedestrians and horsemen, gaunt and Southern-bred, came in by the country roads. The boats, too, were full which plied from Alexandria. Roaming and permeating a city which belonged in a sense to them all, and, except for roofs, might have accommodated a million, our sovereign people from each quarter of the republic paced the broad sidewalks in promiscuous contrast,—hundreds of them, to escape the extortion of hotel-keepers, having slept over night in the rotunda and warm passages of the capitol, where Congress was finishing its protracted session. The houseless and sleepless of a faithful Democracy who hoped for salaries led off by daybreak to the square facing the White House, in whose ample green enclosure the new bronze statue of Jackson, just set up, with its immense mass of metal poised upon the heels of a prancing horse, elicited great admiration. At noon the procession, with its usual military and civic escort, countermarched in front of Wil-

lard's Hotel, and Franklin Pierce took his place in the carriage by the side of President Fillmore, standing erect as the pageant moved towards the capitol, while bowing in response to the loud cheers and waving of handkerchiefs which greeted him from the windows and doorways of Pennsylvania Avenue. The procession quickened its pace, for it began snowing again, but the capitol was not reached until one o'clock. After the usual formal reception in the Senate-chamber, the tardy ceremonies of inauguration began at the east front, where, after Taney, the Chief Justice, had administered the oath of office, the new ruler over twenty-five million inhabitants stepped to the front of the temporary platform, and amid the cheers of a vast concourse of spectators delivered his inaugural address.

It was the first speech of the kind which a President of the United States had pronounced from memory; and Franklin Pierce spoke in a voice remarkably clear and distinct, and in an easy but dignified manner. His young and handsome appearance heightened the force of an oration which was well prepared and more than once interrupted by the heartiest applause. Its key-note was self-confidence, and it breathed a spirit of frankness and cordiality, though, after all, brief and inexplicit as such orations are apt to be, and filled with the good intentions of inexperience. Pierce swam on bladders. He felt no apprehension from increased territory, multiplied States, accumulated wealth, and augmented population; his policy would not be controlled by any timid forebodings from expansion; he desired new acquisitions, could they be peacefully obtained, and warned foreign powers against further interference in the affairs of this continent. In domestic administration he desired that States should be left to manage their own concerns; social theories calculated to weaken the bonds of union he should steadily resist; and he pledged himself to carry unhesitatingly into effect the full compromise measures of 1850.

To the ceremonies of this day a Vice-President was wanting, for King, in feeble health, still sojourned in the

tropical climate of Cuba. There, under a late act of Congress, the oath of office was administered to him by our consul; but his strength fast declined, and returning home

March- to Alabama he died peacefully on his plantation
April. in the course of the following month.

The Senate sat in extra session, with Atchison, of Missouri, for its temporary president. On Monday,
^{March 7.} March 7, the nominations for the new cabinet were sent in and at once confirmed. The list comprised William L. Marcy, of New York, for Secretary of State; James Guthrie, of Kentucky, Secretary of the Treasury; Jefferson Davis, of Mississippi, Secretary of War; James C. Dobbin, of North Carolina, Secretary of the Navy; Robert McClelland, of Michigan, Secretary of the Interior; James Campbell, of Pennsylvania, Postmaster-General; and Caleb Cushing, of Massachusetts, Attorney-General. Of McClelland, Campbell, and the genial Dobbin, fame takes little account. Guthrie, who was summoned to high public functions from banking and railroad enterprises,—private concerns which had absorbed his attention almost to the entire exclusion of politics,—proved a most valuable coadjutor in practical finance, though to other problems of state he brought more ballast than inspiration. Marcy, for different reasons, was destined to an influence in the present cabinet constraining more than creative; noble relic that he was of old-fashioned Democracy, a plain, unceremonious man, of incorruptible integrity, and yet choosing rather to be wrong with his party than right without it; tall and strong in his more distinguished prime, but in these years of stooping gait, though head and face bore to the last the stamp of intellectual force. Northern men, through the dark years that followed,—Northern party opponents even,—recalled him as the good genius of an administration whose youth went easily astray. In fine, the master spirits of this cabinet, as time developed its policy, were Caleb Cushing and Jefferson Davis, pernicious in their unison; the one embittered against his State and section for renouncing him as a Whig scapegrace, and too ready to apply

the consummate powers he possessed as a lawyer to darkening knowledge,—a counsellor in national politics, with a counsellor's flexibility. He was able and energetic; and so, too, was Davis, with haughty egotism, a spreader of pro-slavery, and only a convert from disunion so far as he and the section he supported might bend the Union to its peculiar plans. Cushing had strained eagerly for a place under Pierce; the premiership was what he most desired, but sound Democrats disliked him. Davis, on the other hand, entered the cabinet reluctantly, and upon the President's pressing offer. Once composed, this cabinet was not broken during Pierce's whole term, nor yet did a wreck of it remain after a new president of the same party faith succeeded. The list was finally arranged after Pierce reached the capital, and the Southern bias of this new administration might be detected from its personal composition, and from the allusions, besides, to annexation and the compromise in Pierce's inaugural address.*

Among the leading diplomatic appointments were those of James Buchanan, of Pennsylvania, as minister to England; Thomas H. Seymour, of Connecticut, to Russia; John Y. Mason, of Virginia, a member of earlier cabinets, to France; Pierre Soulè, of Louisiana, to Spain; Solon Borland, of Arkansas, to Central America; and James Gadsden, of South Carolina, to Mexico. Soulè's choice pointed significantly towards Cuba, since he, a foreign-born citizen, with a romantic history, was ardently bent upon the acquisition of new slave soil. The seat he vacated in the senate was filled by John Slidell, President Polk's secret envoy to Mexico, whose colleague, Judah P. Benjamin, had also been lately qualified. To the Supreme Court vacancy the senate, before adjourning, confirmed John A. Campbell, of Alabama, a very able lawyer, but a disunionist in proclivities.

James Buchanan, whose advice Pierce had sought with eagerness after the election, though discoursing of state

* See Horace Mann's Life, 399.

like a Polonius,* seemed a little shy of accepting even the most enviable of foreign honors. The Clayton-Bulwer difficulty was the plum of diplomacy at the present time, and Buchanan was disposed to insist that if he went to London he should have the glory of settling it. But com-

pliance with this condition was not easy, for
^{March-} ^{August.} separate negotiations over reciprocity and the fisheries had already begun. Understanding finally that he should have his way, and leaving these other topics to the State department and his whilom associate under Polk, Buchanan accepted his post after much haggling delay, and sailed for England in the summer.† One thing impressed this astute old statesman before he departed, namely, that Jefferson Davis and Cushing of the cabinet were already deep with the new president, and meant to keep him in the front for re-election. So, when several of

^{May.} them dined together, Buchanan said, in a jocular speech, that old stagers like himself and Marcy ought to stand out of the way and give young America a good chance for a second term; which pleased the cabinet coterie so much that Davis and Dobbin took him arm-in-arm home to his lodgings.‡

Marcy, as the reader has inferred, was no favorite with the bolder spirits of the Pierce administration. They disliked hunkerism, and aimed at a bold and decisive policy. His usefulness to them consisted in the strength he exerted over his important State, which vibrated still in politics, as it often does, with a motion like Galileo's lamp. While supporting Cass in 1848, Marcy had not sundered relations with Dix, Cambreling, the Van Burens, and other dissentients of his party; and in the campaign of 1852 he was an early and efficient negotiator for the reunion of the factions, a work which still went on in these early months of Pierce's term. Though utterly unused to the conduct

* 2 Curtis's Buchanan, c. 3. The Pennsylvania statesman here gives some shrewd and sagacious advice regarding cabinet appointments which he did not fully act upon in later years for himself.

† 2 Curtis's Buchanan, c. 3.

‡ Ibid.

of foreign affairs, this good Democrat soon mastered its routine, and prepared in course of time some excellent state papers. It was natural, however, for a statesman of such simple habits to indulge some whims of his own upon court etiquette. One of his earliest circulars was quite annoying to our ministers and consuls, in recommending them to appear on court occasions in the simple dress of an American citizen. The customary dress of our diplomats had consisted of a plain blue uniform with gold embroidery, and a white waistcoat; and at this time Louis Napoleon, as well as Queen Victoria, stood strongly upon such points of etiquette. Marcy's "black-coat circular" was all the more embarrassing, since it was not peremptory, but left each agent to choose between offending the administration and the court to which he was accredited.*

A correspondence, soon published between the new secretary and Hulsemann, that irrepressible chargé from Austria, made a better basis of popularity for the former; for, after all, the laurels to be won by foreign negotiation in these years grew scantily enough. Koszta, a Hungarian refugee, had been arrested in the harbor of Smyrna, and confined on board an Austrian brig of war, to be carried away, when the United States agent there demanded his release, alleging that he had taken the preliminary steps to become an American citizen. Captain Ingraham of our navy, being then in port with an American sloop-of-war, enforced this demand by threatening to cannonade the brig unless the prisoner was surrendered within a given time. It was finally arranged that the French consul June 28-July 2. should take Koszta in charge until the two governments in conflict should settle the latter's claim to American protection. Ingraham's spirited conduct in the affair stirred our people to enthusiasm,—for they still sympathized with the Hungarian cause,—and Secretary Marcy sustained him fully, announcing in his official dispatches the doctrine of protection to American citizens in the amplest terms. Any explanation for the violation of

* See 2 Goodrich's Recollections, 510; 2 Curtis's Buchanan, c. 4.

Turkish neutrality at Smyrna, our government would make when Turkey herself, and not Austria, complained.* By general consent Koszta was finally released and sailed for the United States.

As the apostle of peace and fraternal harmony, Pierce, attended by his suite, did the national honors at New York city when a junior World's Fair opened there on the 4th of July ; fluent, earnest, and unabashed, he spoke before a vast auditory of twenty thousand. If quick invention be one strong American characteristic, another is the quick and emulous adaptation of ideas invented by others. Here arose a second crystal palace, smaller but perhaps more beautiful than its English prototype, covering a space of five acres. But the project was a private one, and, failing to attract the patronage expected from the old world, sunk the entire capital which stockholders invested in the enterprise. To the present exhibition succeeded others less choice, appealing to the popular purse, but all tending alike to bankruptcy, until, five years later, the building, while in the toils of its creditors, was burnt to the ground. Some of the colossal statuary sent for exhibition, which Europe had never taken the pains to recall, perished in the fatal combustion, and Art shed not a tear.

This flying official visit had political ends to further. Horatio Seymour, who figured among the exhibition dignitaries, was now governor of New York, and the administration wished to reconcile under his auspices the party factions in the Empire State, whose war had raged so bitterly. The "Softs," even when taking an active part to promote the election of Franklin Pierce to the Presidency, still kept a show of standing upon their old anti-slavery Wilmot-Proviso platform ; nor was it until the doors of the New York custom-house flew open, disclosing the salaried spoils within of a great national victory, that they showed alacrity to close the breach and coalesce once more with their old adversaries, the "Hards" or "Hunkers." To these

* Executive Documents, 1853.

they would willingly leave the lion's share of the fat perquisites. But when the "Softs" grew softer, the "Hards" grew harder, and their rule was the orthodox one of keeping the whole perquisites to themselves. This made trouble in that lucrative stronghold of official patronage, where Jacksonian principles had long swayed both national parties. To the collectorship of this port, after Dickinson, the retired senator, had declined the post, the President appointed Greene C. Bronson, lately chief justice of the State court of appeals. Bronson, who, like Charles O'Conor, the new district attorney, carried into politics a rigid rectitude, would not so distribute the spoils as to give September-Free Soilers any nutriment; and, after a pungent November correspondence, Secretary Guthrie finally removed him, and put in his place Heman J. Redfield, from Western New York. Charles O'Conor resigned somewhat later. The "Softs," such as Tilden and Van Buren the younger (a jovial politician, known familiarly as "Prince John"), now publicly indorsed the administration; accepting the Baltimore platform as a finality and in good faith, and purposing to discountenance for the future all agitation of the anti-slavery question.*

The stand our new administration had taken in the Koszta affair was highly popular, and served to revive the commemoration of that imperial doctrine which the Christian church exemplifies by the Gentile apostle's appeal, "I am a Roman citizen." One now might proudly allege American citizenship. Here, as in the court of the new Napoleon, Roman example was coming quite into fashion. Caleb Cushing, as one of the presidential train, reminded the multitude in a July speech that Rome "went on annexing;" the moral of this remark being that America's vast empire should do the same, in fulfilment of the law of natural development. In a published letter, written a few weeks later, he prescribed for Massachusetts Democrats, as though by authority, a policy quite in variance with that which Guthrie was inculcating in another quar-

* Newspapers of the day.

ter. "The President," he wrote in effect, "is immovably convinced of the fatal error of making coalition with the Free Soilers, and thereby giving aid to persistent agitators." The interference accomplished more than it intended; Massachusetts trampled down that coalition which had brought Boutwell, Sumner, and Wilson into influence, rejected the work of the coalition constitutional convention, and elected over all Democratic opponents a Whig governor. In New York, furthermore, the healing touch of the treasury had come too late to repair the schism at this year's poll; and over the separate tickets of Hards and Softs in an off year of State politics, the election showed a fractional strength nearly equal in this party of the administration, while the Whigs carried the plurality.

Political symptoms like these, however, were but trifling, in view of the new and tremendous domestic issue which a single session of the new Congress was now to force upon national politics. Tidings of war at December 5. the Bosphorus — of that war which allied France and England on the side of sick despotism to resist Russia — had but just arrived, when Congress gathered on its usual ground. An organization was effected without delay; Atchison calling the Senate to order, while, in the House, Linn Boyd, of Kentucky, was on a first ballot elected Speaker. In this latter chamber Benton was chief among new-comers, solaced somewhat by a temporary hold upon the House, after losing that seat in the Senate which he had held for thirty consecutive years, a term hitherto unparalleled. The President's message fulfilled expectations; glorious Apollo breathed through its every utterance, florid and rhetorical, but satisfactory. In foreign relations it encouraged the hope that the fisheries and Central American dispute with Great Britain would soon be adjusted; it condemned Cuban filibustering, at the same time catering for the good will of Spain; it took firm but temperate ground on the Koszta question. In domestic affairs the President pronounced the situation free

from any cause of serious disquietude. He had no radical change to suggest in finance; but he proposed increasing the army and navy, and extending to Utah and New Mexico the public land system, from which over \$53,000,000 had accrued to the treasury up to the present time. And recognizing the reserved powers of the people in the several States, as things now tended, he took the Virginian view, adverse to public improvements at the cost of the national treasury.*

When the new year opened and Congress reassembled after the holidays, Franklin Pierce stood strong in the general confidence of the people of both sections.

Swept into the Presidency as he had been by a great popular uprising, men of all parties who knew nothing of his personal fitness or antecedents had rallied to his support with zeal and even with enthusiasm. Juvenile in appearance, with a tinge of sadness occasioned by domestic sorrow, finely bearing himself hitherto on all public occasions, most statesmen looked upon him as one who would lead the people into new and green pastures of peace and conciliation. The conditions under which he began were certainly favorable to such hopes; for the Whigs were now dismembered and destroyed, and he stood the chosen leader of an overwhelming majority. But it is a foible of every democracy to make pets of the plausible and untried, and in its susceptible mood to invest its favorite with virtues and talents which he never possessed; for the public is like an ardent lover, and looks through a highly refracting medium.

Why were our Northern people so easily self-deceived? Why had they not perceived that political signs already pointed to pleasing the South beyond measure? Southern expansion, however, was a slow and uncertain project, and a more immediate benefaction of slave territory was in

* President's annual message; Executive Documents. This last statement glanced unfavorably at projects of a Pacific railway at the national cost.

order from the sycophantic politicians. In the Kansas-Nebraska bill leaps forward the swift generator of new national discontent, new parties. Its originator was Stephen A. Douglas, ambitious, forceful, and subservient; he had put his shoulder to the wheel of tropical annexation, a team which slavery drove; but now he mounted his own chariot. The bell of opportunity strikes, and the fog now lifting shows the great pacification of 1850, no longer the land's end of strife, as the charts had described it, but the rounding-point into a vast and illimitable jungle of sectional controversy, where tigers roar and scorpions stiffen to attack.

The Senate was the scene of this agitating discovery. Here, without warning or suggestion, and as though selfish for the sole paternity of his scheme, Douglas, as chairman

of the committee of territories, reported on the January 4. 4th of January a bill for the territorial government of Nebraska, a region embraced under the old Louisiana purchase, and apportioned to freedom by the famous Missouri compromise act of 1820. One of the sections of this bill, copying the language used under the late compact of 1850 with reference to Utah and New Mexico,* provided that whenever Nebraska should be admitted into the Union as a State or States, it should come in "with or without slavery," as its Constitution at the time of admission might prescribe. "A proper sense of patriotic duty," explained Douglas, "enjoins the propriety and necessity of a strict adherence to the principles, and even a literal adoption of the enactments, of the adjustment of 1850."

"Slavery takes the field," was the instant comment of conscience presses at the North. These had perceived with no complacency that of the territorial committees appointed in each House, an Illinois truckler was chairman,† while the majority consisted of slaveholders; and at once they

* *Supra*, p. 199.

† Richardson, of Illinois, was chairman of the House committee on territories, and he and Douglas acted in concert.

denounced the bill as a covert attempt to override the Missouri compromise. To take the ground more manfully, Dixon, of Kentucky, gave notice of an amendment to the bill, which would repeal expressly the Missouri restriction ; and this manœuvre forced Douglas forward ; for on the 23d of January he reported a substitute bill from his committee, which went all lengths for the new principle of 1850, henceforth to be vaunted as “ popular sovereignty.” This second bill provided for the establishment of two territories, one to be called Nebraska, and the other Kansas. By it that 8th section of the Missouri compromise act which ordained freedom alone north of the extended parallel of $36^{\circ} 30'$ * was distinctly pronounced void, and slavery and freedom were allowed an equal chance to propagate. All questions pertaining to slavery in these territories of Kansas and Nebraska, and in the new States to be formed from them, the local dwellers should decide through their proper representatives ; all cases involving title to slaves and to personal freedom should be referred to the local courts, with a right of appeal to the Supreme Court of the United States ; and the fugitive-slave law should be faithfully executed under all conditions. “The object is not,” explained Douglas, “to admit or to exclude slavery, but to remove whatever obstacles Congress has placed in the way of it, and to apply to all our territories the doctrine of non-intervention.” †

The new domestic policy thus sprung so unexpectedly upon the country was the secret contrivance of a few aspiring Democrats, obsequious to slavery’s propaganda. The people, whether North or South, had neither initiated such a step nor dreamed of taking it. Nor had Douglas himself the hardihood of precipitating the new and iniquitous issue, without previous assurances of the President’s support and approval. With the introduction in the Senate of his second territorial bill came the contempo-

* See vol. iii., p. 165.

† Congressional Globe.

raneous rumor that our Young American administration would support him and bear the measure through. That rumor was well founded.

This measure was not palatable to all of Pierce's cabinet. Marcy, it is well known, was dissatisfied and vexed with the scheme from first to last; though loving party and place too well to forsake his post. Jefferson Davis, the Secretary of War, was the President's inspirer in this business, and, by his own admission, negotiated the compact between the White House and the territorial committee rooms of the capitol. These committees, as he relates, agreed to report their Kansas-Nebraska bill in the new shape, if assured that the President would favorably consider it. This was on a Saturday; Monday was the day for reporting the bill; and on Sunday, the 22d of January 22. January, Douglas and the other members of the two committees paid the President a private visit under the Secretary's personal convoy. Leaving the others in the reception chamber, Davis entered the private apartments of the White House, where Franklin Pierce kept his sabbath seclusion. First explaining the situation to the President alone, he brought him into the reception room for an interview with the committees. Pierce listened to the bill as it was read over, and to the exposition of it, and expressed his approbation. "I consider the bill based," he said, "upon a sound principle, which the compromise of 1820 infringed upon, and to which we have now returned."* The Kansas-Nebraska bill was not — so Davis assures posterity — inspired by the President and cabinet; † to some, certainly, of the cabinet, it must have proved a surprise; but if his own instigation of the policy began with the Lord's-Day interview he describes, the surroundings of his tale are singular. Irreconcilable even to disloyalty as he had been with the compact of 1850, because it refused his own ultimatum to extend the 36° 30' line to the Pacific, it must have been a sweet revenge to assert, as from henceforth he constantly asserted, that the

* Jefferson Davis's Confederacy, 27

† Ibid.

1850 compromise annulled and abandoned the $36^{\circ} 30'$ line altogether.

The grand debate opened in the Senate upon the report of this remarkable substitute bill, and lasted until nearly the close of May. We have no more of those picturesque tableaux which made that debate of four years earlier so memorable ; no consummate Clay attuned the chords of fraternal feeling ; no Webster bent the strong bow of argument ; no pallid Calhoun glided in and out of the chamber, like a spectre of dissolution. Douglas, with his coarse but vigorous style of expression, his sneers and grimaces at negro philanthropy, all for demagogue effect, and that smart and dexterous sword-play of sophistical argument in which he excelled all debaters of his times for gaining the immediate advantage, was the Spartacus of this later exhibition, swelling prodigiously with the munificence of his new *laissez-faire* doctrine for settling the territories. Slaveholding coadjutors kept him in the arena as their gladiator, wishing, so far as possible, to make the new concession appear as a boon, a peace-offering tendered their section by the free States in the spirit of equity and magnanimous justice. Samuel Houston, John Bell, and Edward Everett were among the conservative dissenters from this new legislation ; but the opposition marshalled more instinctively under a trio of senators,—Seward, Chase, and Sumner,—whose more radical antagonism to slavery extension, and whose detachment from the mediating policies which had brought the country into such mischief, qualified them better for leading in this unexpected crisis. To fame's only sure temple the entrance is through freedom's door ; and these three statesmen, equal in ability and force of character to any who encountered them, and yet so differing among themselves in temperament and methods as to supply one another, rather than blend in perfect harmony, grew into the heroes, the representative men, of the next six years' chronicles. "We are on the eve of a great national transaction," said Seward, as this debate approached its climax, "a transaction that will close a cycle in the history of our country."

The Dixon amendment, which Douglas had staved off by his substitute bill,* proposed that the slaveholder should carry his slaves of right into any of the territory hitherto fenced off by the line of the Missouri compromise. But Douglas glorified the principle, to him so much happier, that all should be left to popular sovereignty, to the settlers, to the territorial legislature; and thus might Congress, like Pontius Pilate, wash its hands of the victim's blood. But even here, as the dogma had been forged upon the anvil of his committee-room, there was left a flaw, an ugly ambiguity, which yet would hinder its practical availability. For at what period were the inhabitants of a territory to form and regulate their domestic institutions in their own way? Could they exclude slavery as soon as the machinery of self-government was set up, or only when the time arrived for forming a State Constitution, and applying for equal admission to the Union? And, if at the latter period, how far was Congress obligated to admit at once, and give the proposed Constitution an irrevocable effect? We shall see those difficulties of application presenting themselves presently, and giving rise to new schisms and dissensions in the dominant party which had embraced the new dogma all too heartily. And we shall see, besides, that this grand doctrine of national irresponsibility in the territories plunged the settlers of the hostile labor systems into chronic civil war and bloodshed, while the administration was drawn into an attitude by no means indifferent. Popular sovereignty, in short, was to involve the costliest kind of national interference,—interference without the power to prevent.

How quickly, how alarmingly, did our citizens start up from their repose and the fancied security from agitation to which the great statesmen, now under the sod, had lulled them. The very presentation of this second Kansas-Nebraska act, under the sanction of a responsible Senate committee, set the whole North in anxious commotion.

* *Supra*, p. 281.

Foreign acquisitions, repetitions of the Mexican war,—these seemed too far off to borrow trouble; but here stood slavery ready to force at once the most sacred of safeguards erected to protect free labor. The worst, with too much reason, was at once apprehended. Petitions were circulated and signed, meetings were called in northern centres of population, to remonstrate emphatically against any act of Congress which should disturb the old Missouri compromise. Men and presses identified hitherto with either of the old parties, co-operated. Independent Democrats in Congress, Chase and Sumner reckoned among them, had already sent out a timely letter, arraigning the new bill, almost as soon as it was reported, as a gross violation of a sacred national pledge, and part and parcel of an atrocious plot to promote the advancement of slavery. Agitation was aroused; excitement followed agitation; and, before the authors of the bill could define their own plans, a prejudice immovable as truth itself had been established against it. State legislatures were at this time in winter session; and that of Rhode Island, the first to hurl its denunciations, acted with such spirit and promptness, that the resolutions of its two houses were presented to Congress on the self-same 30th of January that Kansas-Nebraska was first taken up for consideration. From the opening day of February until the close of the present session, and long after final action had been taken on the bill, memorials from citizens of the free States were offered in one branch or the other, protesting against the repeal of the Missouri compromise as a great moral wrong, subversive of all confidence in national engagements. The great body of Christian ministers at the North united in remonstrances of this character, one of which, reaching the Senate in March, bore the signatures of three thousand and fifty of the New England clergy.

Douglas felt the pattering storm as he drove the coach of slavery, aware of the political risks he had taken. Stephen Arnold Douglas — with accent on that second name, already tarnished in history — was bitterly denounced as a traitor to liberty, the Esau of his New Eng-

land birthright. To leave his ground clearer, he moved to amend his bill, while the Senate debate was in progress,

February 7, 15. by making an argumentative section of that part

which removed the restriction of the Missouri compromise. That amendment, which was presently agreed to, declared the restriction inoperative and void, because "inconsistent with the principle of non-intervention by Congress with slavery," as recognized by the legislation of 1850; "it being the true intent and meaning of this act not to legislate slavery into any Territory or State, nor to exclude it therefrom, but to leave the people thereof perfectly free to form and regulate their domestic institutions in their own way, subject only to the Constitution of the United States." Despite the vagueness of these final words, this was "squatter sovereignty," in as concise and authoritative a form as text prior to practical experience could convey it; and the Kansas-Nebraska, in all later stages of its deliberation, was a bill with an explanatory dogma. Immediately after these words, Chase, who had led the first assault upon the bill, proposed to insert a clause declaring that the people of the territory, through their representatives, might prohibit, if they saw fit, the exist-

March 2. ence of slavery. After considerable discussion,

this amendment was voted down by nearly four to one.*

March 3. On the 3d of March, after an exciting night session of six hours, the momentous vote was taken, and the bill passed at five o'clock in the morning by a majority of twenty-three.†

* Strictly speaking, by 36 to 10, only Northern men of Free Soil tendencies — Chase, Dodge, of Wisconsin, Fessenden, Fish, Foot, Hamlin, Seward, Smith, Sumner, and Wade — voting for it. Douglas and his friends parried the effect of such a proposal by claiming that it did not state the alternative for slavery's side so as to conform to the theory of strict national impartiality between slavery and freedom.

† Congressional Globe. The final vote stood 37 to 14. Against the bill were recorded seven Whigs, — Fessenden, of Maine; Smith, of Connecticut; Foot, of Vermont; both Seward and Fish, of New York; Wade, of Ohio; and Bell, of Tennessee; and seven Democrats (counting Sumner and Chase, who ranked rather as Independents), among whom were Hamlin, of Maine; James, of Rhode Island; Walker and

The bill now went to the House, where legislation had been idling through the whole winter. In this branch of Congress, Richardson, of Illinois, who was known as Douglas's first lieutenant, had, on the 31st of January, reported a territorial bill, similar in all respects to the measure then pending before the Senate. It was referred to the committee of the whole, where, under prevailing practice, members might discuss almost any topic which suited their tastes and interests. On the 21st of March, March. the Senate bill, by a vote of 110 to 95, was sent to this same dilatory committee, instead of to Richardson's Committee on the Territories; the motion for that purpose, which the friends of the bill considered a hostile one, being made by Cutting, of New York, who involved himself in consequence in a sort of belligerent conflict with Breckinridge, of Kentucky, that fortunately drew no blood. Nothing more was done until the 8th of May, May. when Richardson moved that the House resolve itself into Committee of the Whole, with the object of gaining precedence for his own territorial bill. Having gained that point by skilful tactics,* he had bill after bill on the calendar laid aside, until his Nebraska bill was reached. No sooner was that taken up in order than he moved to amend by striking out all after the enacting clause, and inserting a substitute in the exact words of the bill which had passed the Senate, except for the Clayton amendment. At noon of the 11th, he moved to close all debate in committee; opponents of the bill manœuvred in every way to defeat the motion; and, after an obstinate struggle lasting until nearly midnight of the 12th, the

Dodge, of Wisconsin; and Houston, of Texas. Phelps, of Vermont, Everett, of Massachusetts, and Clayton, of Delaware, were among those who did not vote. Two amendments had been adopted after Chase's failure; one, which was at Badger's instance, provided that laws relating to slavery prior to 1820 were not revived by this act; the other, or Clayton amendment, deprived all persons in the Territory not fully naturalized of the privilege of voting. The inspiration of this latter amendment will presently appear.

* Congressional Globe. Yeas, 109; nays, 88.

House adjourned, after a continuous session of thirty-six hours. Again, on the 13th, and afterwards on the 15th, Richardson renewed his motion, which, under a suspension of the rules, was finally carried, so that debate should cease at noon of Saturday, the 20th. When that time arrived, the bill was still open to amendments upon which five-minute speeches were permitted. On Monday, May 22d, the House fought its last great battle over the bill. The attendance was large, absentees had all paired off, the galleries and lobbies were crowded, and the floor was occupied by Senators and privileged persons. The last hope of opponents in this parliamentary conflict had been to keep the bill indefinitely in committee of the whole by a running fire of amendments. That hope was frustrated most unexpectedly when Stephens, of Georgia, a friend of the bill, moved to amend by striking out all after the enacting clause. Rejection followed, which made it imperative under the rules to report at once to the House. The House, whose majority was really on Richardson's side, refused to concur in the committee's action; and the Senate bill, without the Clayton amendment, swung into place for decision. A motion to lay on the table was rejected; the bill was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, and it passed by 113 to 100. Half an hour before midnight the House adjourned, having disposed of its share in the iniquitous work — as that body inclines to do on all highly important occasions — by fighting, not with oratory, but the manual.

On the next day the bill with its omission was returned to the Senate, and read for the first time. Upon its second reading recommenced some two days of discussion, May 23-26 in course of which the Clayton, or Native-American amendment, was renewed * and rejected. Douglas closed debate in the small hours of the 26th; and the bill, by a vote of 35 to 13, was ordered to a third reading. It was read a third time, and passed before sunrise without a division. On the 30th of May an act more ill-omened than

* By Pearce, of Maryland.

any to which Fillmore had placed his hand received the signature of the young President, and his secret pledge, of which the people knew nothing, stood fulfilled.* Again, as four years earlier, was freedom betrayed by its chosen representatives into a sacrifice which it had never authorized, never even dreamed of making. The servant in either case had bargained off the rights of his master on his own responsibility.

Four years had passed since the consummation of fraternal unison, when the Wilmot Proviso, that provocative of intestine strife, was laid under the vaults of the capitol. And now was renewed the moral agitation, which had been soothed to rest with so much difficulty, in deadly and terrible earnest. No act of pretended grace was ever engrossed upon our government parchment so utterly uncalled for, and at the same time so despicable and so thoroughly subversive in the end of all that its originators professed to accomplish by it. That it was uncalled for, and in its concession to slavery equally a surprise to North and South, no one ever had the hardihood to dispute ; and the tone of the President's December message is proof at least that no such upheaval of internal policy was then contemplated. The organization of Nebraska territory had been pending earlier, and bills previously introduced were of the usual form and purport ; not a single petition from the people of either section prayed Congress to repeal the Missouri settlement, or to organize this interior territory upon any other basis than the basis of that settlement which, for more than thirty years, had been peacefully acquiesced in. The despicableness of this new scheme was two-fold ; it made freedom and slavery coequal from the national point of view, and it abrogated a solemn compact. That it subverted its own ends will appear as this narrative continues.

* Act May 30, 1854, c. 59; *supra*, p. 282. See *Washington Union*, Oct. 9, 1855, which states that the Missouri repeal amendment was approved by Cass, together with President Pierce, before Douglas reported the bill.

What possible motive, then, founded in a deep sense of public honor and responsibility, could have induced Northern statesmen, like Douglas and Franklin Pierce, to come forward with this boon which its recipients had never asked ? Nothing deeper, we may feel assured, than sycophancy to the slave power, and the ambition which hoped to thrive by it. We had heard before of Northern statesmen, the representatives of free soil and a free constituency, who bowed and bent to that yoke, who yielded under pressure ; but Douglas was the first of freedom's children who ran to throw open the gate to barbarism. America may smile now at the pathos and grandiloquence which invoked, in the name of justice, equal privilege and popular sovereignty, the right of one class of human beings to hold another class, of different color, enthralled like dumb beasts. Of constitutional argument against the Missouri compromise the courts were soon to give enough, for what our fundamentals of Union leave undefined, robed dignitaries will define by their own polities ; and, if slavery infected one limb of the government, it spread easily to another. But of that argument, as yet, the political leaders were timorous. Douglas would gladly have rested on his first base, and given to the Missouri compromise a tacit quietus. Jefferson Davis, too, was hampered by the recollection that the extension of that compromise line had been his platform in 1850. The Missouri compact, if not an ideal one, had given to freedom a share, at least, of the inheritance ; it established good within certain confines, like that first of territorial compromises, the Ordinance of 1787, which, had it passed as Jefferson originally framed it, would have given the whole domain to freedom, both north and south of the Ohio. That handsomer scope was then prevented, because States south of Virginia reserved the rights of slavery for the territory they ceded to the Union ; and Tennessee, Mississippi, and Alabama grew up slave States accordingly.

"Give the fresh acreage henceforth to wheat and thistles, roses and weeds," — this was the magnanimity of the new gospel of popular or squatter sovereignty. The deeper

danger of Clay's latest compromise, we have already seen, was in admitting that new territorial fallacy, though the fugitive-slave act caused the more instant irritation. "With or without slavery," that optional policy which the compromise of 1850 asserted over new soil wholly and indisputably belonging to the United States was sure to breed trouble, not only when its settlement should begin in earnest, but whenever another acquisition came into the arms of the Union. More mischievous by far did the precedent actually prove, under the claim now set up by the authors of the Kansas-Nebraska act, that it retroacted upon the earlier territory of the Louisiana purchase,—that it annulled the sacred pledge of 1820. Such was the argument in which Davis took afterwards a cynical delight, and which Douglas wielded as a two-edged sword. Wicked and impudent sophism; and could only Clay or Webster have left his grave and stalked into the Senate-chamber, his look would have turned the man who uttered it into stone. Seward, in debate, had appealed to the Southern Senators before him who sat in this chamber now, as four years ago, to say whether any one of them had dreamed that the compromise of 1850 abrogated or impaired the Missouri compromise; they were silent. He adjured them to say whether Clay or Webster, or either one of them, had so intended when procuring that compromise; and these fellow-members were silent again. Grant, if we must, that one Congress cannot bind forever,—and, if that rule be good, the later compromise was no more sacred than the earlier one,—yet the moral force of the Missouri settlement remained; slavery had received her equivalent under it in Missouri and Arkansas, and the vacant territories now organized belonged of right to freedom. Retroaction, in fine, has no part in settling domestic more than foreign controversies of such a character. In either case, we seek, not symmetry, but what the existing exigency requires. The settlement composes the matters of strife which are brought expressly into it; immediate convenience and necessity are its object; it seeks to close new wounds, not to reopen old ones. As well go back to read-

just the northeast boundary with Great Britain, after concluding the Oregon frontier, because the principle of the later treaty was a different one, as to unsettle the territorial status of our Louisiana purchase, once solemnly prescribed, for the sake of making it harmonize in principle with that which was set upon the domain we conquered afterwards from Mexico.*

The convenient logic of non-intervention in the territories must have been peculiarly captivating to Northern Presidential aspirants of the era who wished to face in two directions. Nothing was ever heard of this new dogma, that Congress had no power to exclude slavery from national territory until Cass's Nicholson letter of 1847,† and he, perhaps, was the original inventor of "squatter sovereignty," rather than Douglas. It never pleased the North, nor did it suit the South but temporarily. Slaveholders in the present Congress had honor sufficient to refrain from taking strongly the initiative. Davis, whatever his malign influence, kept out of view; Dixon, Badger, Toombs, and Butler abetted rather than led off boldly. Slaveholding members, especially when the debate began, were disposed to be passive and accept the gift of the gods; they did not wish to repudiate the Missouri settlement without Northern concurrence. But when one Northern Senator put the saddle upon this dogma, and another the bridle, while a Northern President obsequiously offered the stirrup, Southern chivalry acted by its instincts when it bestrode the steed to ride it. And even Stephens, when, at the last critical stage in the House, he took the reins and applied whip and spur to drive the bill exultingly through, showed his temper after it was time to take confidence.‡ The Southerner of this age was an out-of-doors rider, full-blooded and mettlesome,

* A lesser objection to the Missouri repeal, upon which conservatives, like Bell, Everett, and Houston dwelt in debate, was the infringement upon Indian rights which followed in consequence.

† *Supra*, p. 100.

‡ For moderate Southern sentiment on this question, see 2 *Coleman's*

a fine horseman in politics, and, with his genial self-confidence and profuse hospitalities, knew how to bend Northern men to his purpose.

Naturally enough, a Congress torn by so terrible a controversy had little thought to bestow upon other subjects. A bill which promised a homestead from the public lands to every actual settler and cultivator was, after much shifting between the two Houses, pared down in principle to a mere graduation of price where lands had remained long in market.* Homestead laws we shall see becoming quite obnoxious to the South, because they favored free labor in the struggling territories. The new President took Jacksonian ground against internal improvements; and a bill appropriating money to repair, complete, and preserve public works, begun under his predecessor, was returned with his veto, though blended with other provisions to which he had no objection.† A joint resolution approved of Captain Ingraham's rescue of Koszta in the Bay of Smyrna. The two Houses adjourned on the 7th of August.

Among the minor topics for debate had been a proposal to pension the widow of a man who was killed in May while assisting the United States marshal in Boston to recapture a fugitive slave. Seward and Sumner made a minority report in the Senate against recognizing any such services as meritorious in their character; but the pension was embodied in an appropriation bill, and granted.

This fatal casualty had occurred in Massachusetts,—that State, of the whole Union, where the enforcement of the

Crittenden (1854), *passim*. The general idea of Congressional non-intervention as to slavery the South had already favored, so far as future acquisitions of territory might be affected. Calhoun, in 1848, announced the doctrine in a speech upon the Oregon bill; and it became, as we have seen, the basis of the adjustment of 1850, with reference to Utah and New Mexico.

* Act August 4, 1854, c. 244.

† Congressional Globe, August 5, 1854.

May-June. fugitive-slave act was most detested. As summer approached, arrests were made in various Northern cities,—New York and Syracuse, for instance,—and while popular excitement over the Kansas-Nebraska infamy approached its culmination; but nowhere was the excitement produced so great as in sedate Boston. The New-England mind scorns an unrighteous action, even when statute law permits of it. Anthony Burns, a runaway from Virginia, betrayed his new home and hiding-place in a letter which fell into the hands of one of the master class in that State, and was communicated to a slave-hunter. The hunter came to Boston, tried to persuade Burns to return peaceably, and finding he would not be coaxed back to bondage, brought the process of law to bear upon him by a well-laid plan.

May 24- It was Boston anniversary-week when Burns's arrest and arraignment took place; thousands of the **June 2.** rural clergy and laity were in attendance upon the various meetings; and an obscure negro, of whom the Boston agitators had never heard before, roused humane sentiment to the deepest demonstration. On the side of the law were soon arrayed writs, lawyers, the slave commissioner, bayonets, cannon, and a United States vessel; on that of liberty, Faneuil Hall and the Boston pulpit. A riot broke out in the night following this arrest, to quell which a company of marines had to be called from the Charlestown navy yard, and a detachment of State militia besides. An overflowing crowd filled "the cradle of liberty," where inflammatory speeches were made by Wendell Phillips and Theodore Parker. The latter, in a Sunday sermon, preached presently the gospel of resistance. For a week the Puritan city was distracted between the duty of submission to rulers and Federal law and the wish to drive slave-hunters from the soil of Massachusetts. The granite court-house, within a few rods of which the hamble victim had been arrested about sundown and carried bodily into its waiting walls, was beleaguered as though an emperor were confined there. A night rescue, attempted too rashly, failed for want of numbers.

Meanwhile Commissioner Edward G. Loring, who held in addition the State office of county judge of probate, conducted his hearing with all the decorum and prolixity that so simple a statute case admitted. The trial was prolonged into a new week, soldiers and a "marshal's guard" of armed ruffians taking possession of a court-house, for this paltry business, which belonged rather to the most solemn judicial courts of the State. On the 2d June. of June, Loring decided that Burns was a fugitive and must be sent back to slavery. People were restrained by this time from rash resistance; but the feeling was deep and intense in this city, in the State, and throughout all New England. Since the rendition of Sims here, three years before, a great change had come over the political feeling of the State where Webster once dominated, and his compromise was felt already a failure. Stores were closed and festooned in black, bells tolled, and indignant citizens with suppressed emotions swelled the crowd on State street, across which had been suspended a huge coffin, and flags with Union down. The vile procession moved, with a field-piece in front, and the poor black was escorted with military pomp from the gloomy precincts of Court square to Long wharf, where he was put on board a steamer and started on the voyage to Norfolk. "Shame! shame!" and hisses went up from the crowd as the soldiery made its brief march.*

This was the last slave ever carried off from Boston soil, and Massachusetts was soon occupied, with other Northern States, in framing personal-liberty bills, whose object was to obstruct fugitive-slave process by every available means not plainly unconstitutional. And the movement in this commonwealth gained constant headway to force the obnoxious Loring out of his probate judgeship by address to the legislature. He had not dealt with this case dishon-

* Newspapers of the day; 1 Adams's R. H. Dana, c. 14. The master to whom Burns was surrendered treated him not unkindly, having once gained the point which he had in view, by vindicating his rights under the Federal law. Burns's freedom was presently purchased, and he returned to the North once more.

orably ; but, by holding two such commissions of the judicial sort, he undertook to serve two masters, and Massachusetts would not tolerate the idea that any one holding an office of honor or emolument under her should earn the blood-money of slave-hunters.

Foreign relations deserve some brief attention. In Mexico, Santa Anna was once more President,—that citizen of vicissitudes, whose wondrous energy kept the plucked republic from lapsing into anarchy. To him

1853. Gadsden, our newly appointed minister, had presented his credentials, with assurance of friendly feelings which the Mexican President reciprocated. Troubles, however, had already broken out upon the frontier line marked by the Guadalupe-Hidalgo treaty. Indians here pursued their atrocities ; and, in the neighborhood of El Paso, an armed conflict had lately taken place between Americans and Mexicans, who accused one another of cattle-stealing. Having in view a route, which some of our citizens projected, for running a Pacific rail-

December. way through the valley of the Gila, Gadsden, in December, concluded with Santa Anna a treaty proposing a new and more southerly boundary. President

1854. Pierce transmitted this treaty to the Senate, and

April. in April it was ratified with amendments by a close vote. The extent of territory to be thus acquired, which embraced originally an immense tract of about thirty-nine million acres in Chihuahua and Sonora, was cut down one half, and the sum to be paid to Mexico was reduced from twenty to ten million dollars. Mexico having accepted these modifications, the treaty was finally

June 30. ratified and proclaimed on the 30th of June. By the terms of this new cession, various provisions of the original treaty of peace with Mexico were abrogated ; and, while satisfaction for the Garay and other private claims was ignored, the Mexican grant of 1853 for a railroad route across the isthmus of Tehuantepec was recognized and protected, so that the government of the United States might interpose protection on its own

behalf.* Congress, at its first session, appropriated the money needful for this purchase, and incorporated the new acquisition for the time being with the territory of New Mexico.†

The Crimean war, involving France and England early this year, quickened the impulse of the more ardent among our slavery expansionists at the South to seize the sway of the neighboring gulf region and West Indies. "Let us get this region," was the argument of an administration press in South Carolina, "and

May.

we cannot only, if the South unite, preserve domestic servitude, but we can defy the power of the world."‡ General Quitman, ardent and quixotic to the end of his life, had, in 1853, visited his native village on the Hudson, where he made stirring appeals to the simple populace to preserve "our glorious Union," by respecting the "reserved rights" of the States; at the same time that the secret object of his journey thither through large

1853.

Atlantic cities was to raise funds for a new filibustering enterprise to Cuba, the plan he had never ceased to cherish.§ Filibustering against Lower California and Sonora was planned at San Francisco that same year by William Walker, another visionary, whose aim was Southern aggrandizement. He sailed in October with his expedition down the Pacific coast, and landed at La Paz on the 4th of November, where he made the Mexican governor prisoner, and assumed to be President of the new Republic, proclaiming to the inhabitants of Lower California that rescue from evils which tyrants habitually profess

* 10 U. S. Stats. at Large, 1031. Some scandal of bribery attached to Gadsden's negotiations with Santa Anna. Gadsden guarded the transaction with great secrecy, bringing to Washington the original treaty in person, and carrying it back as amended. A private letter from him, which soon found its way into print, shows that he felt much displeased with the alterations made in his treaty, which he had originally intended should be of liberal benefit for the expansion of the South and her social institutions.

† Acts June 29, 1854, and August 5, 1854.

‡ Southern Standard, Charleston, S. C.

§ 2 Claiborne's Quitman, 193.

1854. to intend at the outset. A few weeks found his crusade in difficulties; the expected reinforcements failed to arrive, his few followers deserted, and he was forced to retreat with a little band in which officers far outnumbered the enlisted men. After various skirmishes with Mexicans and devious wanderings,

May. Walker, in May, reached the State line of California, and surrendered himself and his command to a detachment of United States troops. This failure, together with the Gadsden settlement, put an end to invasions of Mexican territory for the present; but it was not the last of filibuster Walker.

Southern expansionists were most intent at this time upon acquiring Cuba. They did not realize how strong a barrier of opposing sentiment they were already rearing in the Northern States by their course in the Kansas-Nebraska iniquity. England and France (wrote Stephens imperiously) have set their heads against the policy of that island towards us; we cannot permit them to go on with their policy of filling it with Africans; "we must and will have it."* But finding the President vacillat-

May-June. ing and perplexed upon the subject, the Georgian was soon disgusted; he did not believe the administration intended to do anything favoring Cuban acquisition, and he doubted if it had the nerve to take the indispensable steps for accomplishment.†

The new President, indeed, was personally well-disposed to the cherished cause of Southern expansion; his repeated utterances in public evinced such a disposition, and the Gadsden treaty was a first, and not the only proof, he gave of his favor. But our Granite State paragon had not the audacious cunning of a Jackson, who had facilitated the Texan robbery while professing to look on as an impartial spectator. Kansas-Nebraska, too, was a heavy and an unexpected load in his panniers as he crouched, like an Issachar, between two burdens. Marey and the old-school Democracy kept foreign affairs from extravagance. Upon one point,

* Johnston's A. H. Stephens. 276-278.

† Ibid.

therefore, conservatism held the new cabinet, much to the chagrin of those impetuous drivers who were cracking the whips,—that the neutrality laws of the United States must be observed, and freebootery, in the name of protection to free institutions, put down. Filibustering, in short, must be conducted, if at all, not as a private, but a public enterprise. Under that decision was issued the first ^{1854.} proclamation of warning against any unlawful ^{January 18.} expeditions against nations with which we were at peace; referring especially to Walker's invasion of Lower California, which was certainly in the way of the Gadsden negotiation. And upon deliberation more difficult followed, in May, another official warning, directed this time ^{May 31.} against the Quitman expedition which was then fitting out for the invasion of Cuba.

These prudent manifestoes by no means pleased the more ardent friends of Southern Democracy. Gwin, of California, had made tart comments in the Senate when the former proclamation was published.* Upon the appearance of the latter one, dissent was bolder. Mallory, a Senator from Florida, had offered a resolution ^{May.} a fortnight previously, protesting, in the name of common humanity, against recent acts of the Spanish government, which many apprehended would place Cuba in control of its negro population. A difficulty had arisen, too, in course of the winter with the customs officers in Cuba, who seized and confiscated cotton on board an American steamer, the "Black Warrior," which touched at Havana on her way from New Orleans to New York, because her manifest certified that there was no cargo. The officers of the port were peremptory; and the captain, when they refused to have a technical error corrected, hauled down the national colors, and surrendered his vessel also. The report of this transaction made great commotion in this country, and Quitman's sympathizers in Congress, Slidell and others, were for red-hot retaliation,—they asked to have the neutrality laws suspended at

* Congressional Globe, January 19.

once against the offending country. Spanish relations wore a menacing aspect for the remainder of the session. Soulè, our minister at Madrid, was instructed to demand

August. prompt reparation. On the 1st of August the President, in response to a resolution of inquiry, summed up the situation in a message censorious of Spain. Instead of promising indemnity for the "Black Warrior," she had defended the seizure, thus adopting the action of the Cuban authorities as her own. We, meantime, had enjoined all private invasions of Cuba; and it rested with Congress to take provisional measures to insure the observance of American rights and interests. Upon this hint the foreign relations committee of the Senate reported that nothing would satisfy the United States but full redress from Spain, with guarantees for the future; but, as the time of adjournment was near, the whole matter might be left with the Executive until Congress met again.*

The administration had meantime given earnest of its purpose to put down private filibustering, by recourse to the machinery of the Federal courts. Quitman, with other chief promoters of the Cuban enterprise, was summoned at New Orleans to give penal recognition to obey the neutrality laws. Failing to do this, he was arrested, but finally complied.

June-July. Quitman's private letters still broached the idea of slavery expansion which

August. dominated his thoughts. "The great question of our age and generation," he wrote, is "whether American or European policy shall prevail in this continent. Of this great question, Cuba is the battle-ground for its solution." Europe, he believed, was trying to emancipate the slaves of that island; to erect there an insular empire, negro or mongrel; and, for that very reason, we ought to encourage Cuban revolution. "Our destiny is intertwined with that of Cuba. If slave institutions perish there, they will perish here. Thus interested, we must act. Our government, already distracted with the slavery question, cannot or will not act. We must do it as individuals."†

* Congressional Globe. † 2 Claiborne's Quitman, 195-208.

The consummation of the Kansas-Nebraska plot, which a few ambitious leaders had concocted, shook the free States once more to their centres with just indignation. Slavery was at length disclosed as an aggressive force bent upon dominating the policy of the American continent. Thousands of fair-minded citizens, who had been incredulous, were at last convinced that mere abstinence from agitation and intermeddling would neither save the Union nor satisfy the Southerners. Northern Whigs, not too abject to value their moral self-respect, felt that they had compromised enough, and more than enough; that pious preaching and cowardly palliation would make us, if we went on thus, a nation of hypocrites. Without the help of Southern Whigs, their late party associates,—men like Pearce, Badger, Jones, Toombs, the plumed Stephens and the faltering Clayton,—that treacherous bill would never have passed. “Repudiate such fraternity,” was the cry; “throw old party considerations to the winds, and appeal to the honest people of the free States, without distinction of polities.” And calling God to witness the justice of their cause, the better remnant of the Northern Whigs fled from the Sodom and Gomorrah where old compacts were smoking in the flames. Anti-slavery Democrats, Free Soilers, all who would unite with them to fight the Dagon of slave aggrandizement under the shield and banner of the Constitution, were brothers. No matter that some were scrupulous of consequences, while others hoped in time to make the universe free; their common political ground was loyal and legitimate resistance to slavery extension into free national territory. All opponents of slave extension might meet on this common platform.

The repeal of the Missouri compromise became thus the patent grievance on which Northern opposition now united. Northern newspapers paraded in heavy type the men of their section who voted for that repeal in Congress, as a list of infamy. Other surrounding incidents intensified this feeling: the marauding enterprises for Southern annexation, which alarmed the more because so little was

known of their real origin ; the surrender of Anthony Burns, and other late arrests under the fugitive-slave act ; the shooting of a schoolmaster in Kentucky by a high-mettled son of chivalry, whom a jury acquitted for the offence ; and the offensive expressions which Southern gentlemen began to use very freely, to express their disdain of the common people and all who toiled by their own sweat. In the half-enslaved State of Indiana, where May 24, 25. a party revolt was impending, Jesse D. Bright, of the Senate, presided over the Democratic convention, and procured the passage of a resolution which pledged support to the Nebraska bill ; but next day the free Democrats of the State, meeting at Indianapolis, denounced the bill as an insult, a wanton violation of plighted faith, a cold-blooded conspiracy against humanity and republicanism, and a crime against God. Among the members conspicuous in this latter convention was George W.

June. Julian, who took his place among the pioneer political reformers. Soon after the passage of the Nebraska bill members of Congress who were opposed to it issued a protest over their signatures, setting strongly forth the reasons of their opposition.* By this enactment, they contend, the free States "have lost all guarantee for freedom in the Territories contained in former compromises ; while all the States, both slave and free, have lost the guarantees of harmony and union which those compromises afforded." And they further affirm that this measure looks to the wider extension of slavery in the future,—to the annexation of Cuba and portions of Mexico, at any cost, whether of money or blood ; to warlike co-operation with Russia against England, France, and Spain ; to an alliance with Brazil in extending slavery into the valley of the Amazon ; and finally, to the withdrawal of the slaveholding States from the Union, and the establishment of a separate empire in the central regions of the continent.

In the Senate this latter address was severely criticised

* This address was written by Seward. Seward MSS.

by Jones, of Tennessee. "I have never seen," he declared, "a production which contains in so few words so much fiction and pure imagination." And claiming that the bill would have passed Congress had no Southern senator voted for it, he turned upon those signers of the address who had presented petitions for abolishing the fugitive-slave law, which he said was equivalent to petitioning for the dissolution of the Union, since it could not be preserved for a day after the repeal of that law. Sumner replied with spirit that if the Union could not exist after the repeal of the fugitive-slave law, it ought to come to an end; and when asked if he would return a fugitive, asked: "Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?" Butler and Pettit next arraigned the Massachusetts senator severely for repudiating the oath he had taken to support the Constitution of the United States. "I swore to support that Constitution as I understood it," was Sumner's response, "and not as it was understood by others."*

The project for fusing men of all the old parties who were opposed to slavery extension into a new or anti-Nebraska party developed rapidly at the North. Free Soilers, old line Whigs, Wilmot-Proviso Democrats, men at the antipodes of sentiment, so far as the cause of practical emancipation was concerned, came into concert. But the process was necessarily gradual and tentative; affairs were not yet ripe for national concert; and the States and Congressional districts were this year the proper places for activity. By the 4th of July Union State Conventions had been called in Vermont, Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, and Wisconsin, irrespective of former party affiliations. New York and Pennsylvania moved also in remonstrance,—Galusha A. Grow and David Wilmot, in the latter State, being among the earliest to lead in such demonstration. Michigan, at an anti-Nebraska convention held in Detroit on the sixth day of July, first christened this anti-Nebraska fusion by the party name of "Republican," and in similar Ohio and Wisconsin conventions, one week later, that same name was adopted. But in New York

July.

* Congressional Globe.

and various other free States, the elements did not combine so spontaneously. A convention of delegates, representing men in the Empire State of all parties who were opposed to the Missouri repeal, met at Saratoga on ^{August.} the 16th of August. John A. King, Greeley, and ^{September.} Raymond took prominent part in it. No State ticket was nominated; but the convention adjourned until September. The Whigs, that month, at Syracuse, with a similar platform, nominated for governor Myron H. Clark; whereupon the anti-Nebraska convention, upon reassembling, adopted that ticket, as did also on the following day the State temperance convention. Both of these latter conventions were held at Auburn, the home of Seward. "Which convention shall I attend?" asked an anti-Nebraska delegate of the senator. "It makes little difference," was the reply; "you go in at two doors, and come out of one."*

In tracing the growth and influence of national parties, we must now take cognizance of the Native-American or Know-Nothing organization. This was a sort of exhalation, arising from the decay of old parties and putrid national issues; it served as a brief phenomenon of the times and then passed off. Like anti-Masonry, its soap-bubble burst in the effort to blow up to the size of a Presidential factor. But some such political diversion suited quite tolerably the mood of that huge fraction of the people, loyal but disaffected on the usual issues, who felt just now political orphanage. During that twelvemonth of delusive harmony which was broken so rudely by the discord of the Kansas-Nebraska strife, defeated Whigs and rebellious Democrats plunged thoughtlessly by the thousands into this new excitement of Native Americanism, and were led on eventually step by step until they found themselves sworn members of a dark-lantern order, the opposite of anti-Masonry. The order was a secret one,† popularly

* Seward MSS.

† The true name of the order (understood to be "Sons of '76") was not revealed until one was admitted to the higher degrees.

called "Know-Nothings," because its members, when questioned as to its methods and principles, were sworn to profess their entire ignorance. Abuses in the administration of large cities more especially they proposed to rectify by excluding foreigners from office. They revived the bitter spirit of intolerance against the Roman Catholic Church, — such as ten years before had been shown in the riots of Charlestown and Philadelphia, — by representing it as foreign, the handmaid of popular ignorance, and bent on chaining America to the throne of the Vatican.

Bedini, a nuncio of the Pope, sent to the United States on some religious embassy, was nearly mobbed at Cincinnati, and had to conceal himself in various places, until the chance was found to embark for home from the port of New York. Catholic churches, the ecclesiastical castles of this new world, were assaulted every now and then by some crowd of Bible bigots, helped on by the brawny friends of free fight, — at one place inflamed by the trumpeting harangues of a street preacher who styled himself the Angel Gabriel; at another by the report of priestly liberties taken with a young girl at confessional; and once again by the published revelations of some converted Jesuit or escaped nun, who painted the "great red dragon" in the most flaming colors. These were days of something like a Protestant fanaticism. Cathedrals had to be barricaded on election day, and the military called out to keep an excited mob, which had robbed a church of its gilded cross, from proceeding to fire and pillage.

True, there existed some provocations to this spirit in many of our centres of population, and in New York city most of all. Irish immigrants, the great body of our Roman Catholic worshippers, were often clannish, misguided, prone to violence, dominated rather than induced by their priesthood and a corrupt Democracy. With many such voters, to be naturalized was like a sheep-washing. Irish bands on election day prowled along the dirtiest of New York streets, armed with clubs, and ready to provoke a fight as to defend themselves. Yet the tide of

immigration gained constantly in German and liberal elements, whose religious and political flux was very different. These, like the Irish, were repelled by the enmity of the new order. Then, too, the secret exclusiveness of this new party was an insuperable barrier to influence. Roman Catholic Irishmen were not impervious to the cross-light of free ideas, though imported with preconceptions so one-sided. "There should be no secret organizations in a republic," it has been truly said, "where every man ought to have his principles written on his forehead."*

Native Americanism, like Tammany itself, its arch-enemy, concentrated its aims originally upon winning local and municipal victories. Born of the civic contests of Philadelphia and New York in 1843, this new order was in 1852 devised and started under broader auspices and with more subtle principles of political action. No badges, no banners, were displayed; its meetings were held as privately as possible; and each lodge sent delegates to a "council," which attended to political nominations. The earlier plan was to select men already put forward on the regular tickets, and vote for them without public announcement. Next they proceeded to nominate tickets of their own, exhibiting still greater local strength; as in Philadelphia, for instance, in Baltimore, New Orleans, and San

Francisco. But this favoring year the order
1854. spread out its drill and resources to capture States and project national victories. Its notable successes were in Massachusetts and Delaware, two States which in earlier years had adhered most strongly to John Adams and the fourteen years' naturalization act of the ultra-Federalists, against Jefferson and generosity. The Massachusetts Whigs, this fall, renominated Washburn for Governor, recording their remonstrance against the repeal of the Missouri compromise. But the grudge of the Free Soilers to the gentlemen's party in this State was insuperable; coalitions for power were by this time the breath of nature to them, and they fused largely this year

* Johnston's A. H. Stephens.

with the Know-Nothings. Washburn, withal, had offended by allowing Burns to be carried back to slavery. As a consequence, Henry J. Gardner, the candidate of the Native Americans, and a man whose family could hold up its head on Beacon Hill, was borne into the executive chair by a tidal wave,—more than fifty thousand majority behind his back, and a legislature Know-Nothing almost by default, the small-fry of polities. In Delaware, a very different sort of State, the Whigs disbanded, and merged themselves boldly in the new organization under the marshalship of kind old Clayton, whose latest but most imbecile effort was to build on the sands of Native Americanism a strong sanctuary from all sectional strife.

In the same amicable and fraternal spirit, did the grand council of this secret order, meeting at Cincinnati, resolve that Know-Nothings should be neither pro-slavery nor anti-slavery, so far as national polities were concerned; and casting about for Presidential standard-bearers in the contest to come, their talk was of Millard Fillmore, Houston, John Bell, and of Clayton himself. Serving indeed, in the unexpected national emergency to furnish a night's shelter or half-way house to northern Whigs and others who were on their way to a free-territorial combination, and yet fastidious in the choice of company, and timorous about geographical parties, this Native-American party was of far more permanent consequence to the South. No party, however humane and philanthropic might be its platform, was likely to gain a footing in any slave State which breathed the slightest hostility to the permanence and growth of slave institutions. For National men and conservatives, consequently, who at the South were out of touch with the administration, this American party, as we shall see, proved a cohesive force long after its distinctive creed had perished in contempt. And Unionism soon signified to statesmen of this calibre the old-fashioned Whig compromising disposition, which neither North nor South, in truth, would longer tolerate, where slavery extension was concerned.

In New York State, this fall, the Know-Nothing vote fell short of anticipations. The Democrats, too, divided; and Bronson, the discarded collector, ran as an anti-Pierce candidate against Seymour, who stood for re-election. Fusionists were for reform on the liquor as well as the Nebraska issue. They won over all opponents, and Myron H. Clark, their candidate (by a close margin, however), was chosen governor. In Pennsylvania, James Pollock, who was on the Whig and American tickets, defeated Bigler. The Northwestern States were swept rather by the anti-Nebraska tornado, and Douglas, in Chicago, would scarcely be listened to. Throughout the entire range of States where free labor was respected, the Federal administration, this fall, lost heavily,—defeated in nearly every State by the union of elements in which, on the whole, opposition to the Missouri Compromise repeal and slavery's interior march was uppermost. Political sentiment throughout the Union was in transition, and the new political drift was inevitably to sectionalism, as the phrase of the day defined it,—to geographical parties for or against making slavery national.

Congress convened in final session, aware of election results which would unseat many of the present members and give the next House to the opposition. But, ^{1854,} December 4— with the majority, to retreat or advance was ^{1855,} March 3— equally impossible. Propositions failed alike for ^{1855,} March 3— repealing the Kansas-Nebraska act or for making the fugitive-slave measure more efficacious. The pulse of legislation beat feebly; all things seemed flat and stale. One good measure reorganized the consular and diplomatic service, pruning down fees and perquisites, and fixing the salaries of foreign ministers according to their several grades; * another organized, though crudely, a board or court of claims.† Appropriations were voted; and, at the earnest request of the Secretary of War, approved by the President, four new regiments were added to the army.

* Act March 1, 1855, c. 133.

† Act February 24, 1855, c. 122.

Scott was brevetted a lieutenant-general for eminent services, a distinction which pleased him greatly. There were vetoes at this session of steamship subsidies and the French spoliation bill; and some measures for river, harbor, and internal improvements failed in the last hours for want of the President's signature. In a special message Pierce took decided ground against aiding projects of internal improvement from the public treasury.*

To turn once more to the foreign situation. The Russian war went vigorously on; Sebastopol was invested by the allies, but not yet taken. Neutral and belligerent rights during this war were of immediate interest to American commerce, already prosperous and promising to expand immensely, while war engaged our rivals. Queen Victoria's government gave prompt adhesion to ^{1854,} the liberal rule, for this war, that free ships ^{February-} should make free goods,—a rule which Marcy ^{July.} wished might be unconditionally sanctioned by both France and Great Britain, so as to go forth to the civilized world as the recognized and permanent international principle for all wars. We promised on our part to observe the strictest neutrality towards each of the belligerents. Our laws already forbade, as against powers with whom we were at peace, the equipment of privateers or the enlistment of troops within our jurisdiction; and these laws we would strictly enforce. But now, in various conferences with Buchanan at London, Lord Clarendon broached another proposition,—that the United States should join in agreeing unconditionally to abolish privateering, and thus establish another great principle in belligerent rights. To this Marcy refused assent, for the reason that in case the United States ever went to war with Great Britain, whose navy was ten times greater than our own, the armed merchant marine would be our only weapon of advantage. France and Great Britain announced, therefore, that the rule, "free ships make free

* Message January 2, 1855.

goods," was their concession for the time being, but not as a permanent international right. We next proposed special conventions with other European powers, embracing the rule desired; and so, too, that neutral property, other than contraband, on board an enemy's vessel should not be confiscated. Russia acceded to these doctrines, and a convention accordingly was concluded which pledged Russia and the United States to observe these principles, not only as between themselves, but also as between themselves and all other nations which should enter into like stipulations.*

Commercial reciprocity was arranged between the United States and Great Britain early in the course of the Eastern

war, ^{1854.} *Marcy* and Lord Elgin being the negotiators.[†] It opened to our inhabitants the sea fisheries of the British provinces, enlarging the rights accorded us under the convention of 1818; it gave British subjects in return the right to participate in sea fisheries, except shell fish, on the eastern coast of the United States, as far southward as the 36th degree of north latitude; it established free commerce between the provinces and the United States, in flour, breadstuffs, fruits, fish, animals, lumber, and a variety of natural products of the respective countries in their manufactured state. The St. Lawrence River and the Canadian canals were thrown open to American vessels, and the American government, in return, besides granting entrance to Lake Michigan, undertook to urge the States to admit British vessels into their canals upon reciprocal terms.[‡]

Pleasing as this arrangement was to the United States, no progress could as yet be made towards expelling British

^{1854-55.} influence from Central America, or in gaining that pre-emption of this Western continent which the

* President's Message, December 4, 1854; Ex. Docs.; 10 U. S. Stats. at Large, 1105. This convention with Russia was concluded at Washington, July 22, 1854, and proclaimed on the 1st of November following.

† This was signed at Washington on the 5th of June, and promulgated in September.

‡ 10 U. S. Stats. at Large, 1089.

perverted scope of the Monroe Doctrine was in these days interpreted to mean. England and France yielded only to our menace in that respect so far as they were forced to yield. "The Monroe Doctrine," said Lord Clarendon to Buchanan, politely, "is merely the dictum of its distinguished author;"* and Spanish-American republics thought no better of it. Central America presented the aspect of internal confusion and petty warfare, when an emigrating party prepared, under one Colonel Kinney, to colonize and settle certain portions of the Mosquito coast, alleging title under a grant from one of that dusky dynasty which was propped up by the British protectorate. The government of Nicaragua protested against this expedition as a hostile invasion in violation of the neutrality laws, contending with much force that the United States had explicitly and repeatedly denied the right of the Mosquito king to grant any soil or exercise any sovereignty upon the Honduras coast. Our Secretary of State at first defended the expedition, but settled soon into a more impartial view. Kinney had claimed that his colonizing purpose was peaceful. If this be so, argued Marcy, and his followers choose to abandon all claim to the protection of the United States and submit to the jurisdiction of a foreign country, this government will not interfere with the expedition. But the ministers of the Central American States still denied that Kinney had any genuine grant of lands within their dominions, nor did our own government acknowledge the Mosquito king.†

Upon this same Mosquito coast the little town of San Juan, or Greytown, had lately been bombarded and destroyed by one of our naval vessels. It was a base and bullying exploit, unworthy of a dignified government. This town quarrelled with a transit company which had made a preposterous claim of damages. In May, 1854, a negro was shot by a steamship captain in the vicinity, and the mayor of San Juan sent an officer on

* 2 *Curtis's Buchanan*, 132 (1854).

† *Dipl. Corr.*, January, February, 1855.

board the steamship with a warrant to arrest the offender; but the passengers resisted, Borland, minister of the United States to Nicaragua, taking the lead in disputing the mayor's authority. When Borland afterwards went on shore, the Greytown officials tried to arrest him, and during the street fight which ensued, he was struck in the face with a bottle thrown by some unknown person. The

^{June.} United States ship "Cyane" was despatched to the place, under Commander Hollins, and on the 11th of July immediate payment was demanded

^{July.} of the transit company's extortionate claim, coupled with ample apology for the insult offered to Minister Borland. The authorities of Greytown made no reply; and, after due warning the next day, Commander Hollins, on the morning of the 13th, proceeded to open his guns upon the town. The fire from the "Cyane" was kept up at intervals until the middle of the afternoon, when a party was sent on shore to set the houses on fire, and complete the work of destruction. Against this bombardment Lieutenant Jolley, of the British ship "Bermuda," protested in vain, his strength being quite too inferior to resist. This wanton destruction of a poor little town was a piece of barbarism, both needless and outrageous; inflicting injury because injustice was withheld, and punishing a whole community for the sins of individuals. Our administration tried to palliate the incident as a trifling one, for which it was not to blame;* but this swaggering contempt of black and mixed races to the south of us, as of people who must submit and not parley, was a phase of the American character in this slaveholding age, of which Greytown's bombardment afforded no solitary instance.

In vain did an administration deferential to Southern wishes surge round the coveted isle of Cuba. Neither buccaneering nor the arts of skilful diplomacy could wrest from the Spanish crown that most precious prize. Pierre

* Message, December, 1854, and Ex. Docs.

Soulè, whom Pierce had sent out as minister to Madrid, was among the most ardent of Southern expansionists. French by birth, and in younger years a French prisoner of State and a refugee, he was so obnoxious to the new empire that Louis Napoleon would not allow him to tarry at Paris while on the way to his post. Reaching Madrid, he eagerly applied every art of menace and cajolery to induce Spain to cede Cuba to the United States. 1853.

Following his instructions, he furthermore protested that other European powers ought not to interfere in the transaction. In the spring of 1854 came from Washington a demand of redress for the 1854. "Black Warrior" injury, following which, Soulè, in April, was fully empowered to treat for the purchase of Cuba. The grand purpose, now, and the grand emergency, were to prevent the emancipation of slaves in that island, and the importation of free Africans. This last secret pressure Soulè applied while the Northern people were rising in angry remonstrance against the repeal of the Missouri compromise.

A conference was next called of our ministers to England, France, and Spain, for the purpose of concerting action to aid Soule's negotiation. Secretary Marcy had suggested this; and, at Ostend, Buchanan, Mason, and Soulè assembled on October 10th, transferring their deliberations to Aix-la-Chapelle, and continuing together in consultation until the 18th of the month, when they drew up their official report. This meeting, known henceforth in history as the Ostend conference, proposed a bold stroke on the part of our government, in apparent ignorance of its new sectional perplexities. An immediate and earnest effort, they reported, ought to be made to purchase Cuba from Spain at any price not exceeding a certain maximum.* Our proposal ought to be open, frank, and so as to challenge the approbation of the world. Such a transfer to the United States, they represented, would be beneficial to Spain,

* This maximum price was afterwards indicated at \$120,000,000.

beneficial to all the commercial nations of Europe; and what with her own oppression and the danger of insurrectionary troubles, Spain, unless she sold, would be quite likely to lose Cuba and the price as well. And finally, supposing a price shall be refused, the question will remain, whether Cuba in the hands of Spain does not endanger our internal peace and the existence of our Union; and, if so, we should be justified by every law, human and divine, in wresting it from Spain if we possess the power.* Such was the Ostend manifesto, designed no doubt by the three who signed it to make an impression upon the European nations now entangled in war as well as their own government. Should Spain be drawn into that war on the side of the allies, Russia, so bold spirits imagined, would aid the United States to plunder her.† No such favorable contingency came into being; President Pierce was too prudent to follow the course advised by the Ostend despatch, and Kansas-Nebraska made the whole North vigilant to prevent more foreign acquisitions in slavery's interest. Soulè, observing the hesitation of his government, threw up his commission at the end of the year and returned home, disgusted with the futility of his mission. Spain, somewhat later, made compensation for the "Black Warrior," and showed a disposition to pacify.

The picturesque side of the Cuban negotiation, which was doomed to linger along as a tantalizing effort to pur-

1855, chase that which was not for sale, the President
March 3. revealed to this Congress in its expiring hours. More favorable results had attended the naval expedition to Japan, under Commodore Perry,‡ in a treaty concluded about a year before.§ It opened to our vessels certain Japanese ports for coal and other supplies, granted hospitable treatment to shipwrecked sailors, and, while stint-

* President's Message, March, 1855, and Ex. Docs.

† 2 Claiborne's Quitman, 209.

‡ *Supra*, p. 255.

§ 11 U. S. Stats. at Large, 597. This treaty was signed March 31, 1854, and officially promulgated June 22, 1855.

ing all other intercourse, promised in an amicable spirit whatever additional favors this distant empire might see fit at any future day to confer upon other nations. As with imperial China, seclusion and calm self-sufficiency marked the first commercial dealings of this bright Lilliputian empire with the outer world; and upon a bell which Perry brought home as a present from the Mikado's negotiator, was engraved the inscription in strange characters, that "barbarism would never invade the land."* Nations, enlightened or superstitious, will, when safely isolated, look with the same disdainful superiority upon the rest of the human race.

SECTION II.

PERIOD OF THIRTY-FOURTH CONGRESS.

MARCH 4, 1855—MARCH 3, 1857.

FOREIGN relations, for the six remaining years of this narrative, are dwarfed and overshadowed by the tremendous struggle for civil preponderance which now ensued between the irreconcilable forces of freedom and slavery. That domestic struggle culminated during this same brief space of time in the political triumph of the one, followed promptly by the appeal of the other to disunion and the sword of civil war. What most absorbed public attention in those important years must now command ours as we retrace the course of portentous events. As for that cormorant appetite for seizing weak sovereignties to the southward and incorporating them with the American Union,—that hungry zeal to extend a protectorate over Central America, to annex Cuba, to split off new sections of Mexican territory fringing upon our national borders,—that whole misguided policy of robbery and subjugation which seeks to conceal its cruel features under the mask of manifest destiny,—its symptoms be-

* See Griffis's Life of Perry, c. 33.

come of secondary consequence. External and forced expansion towards the tropics was but one element of the cotton slaveholders' policy to propagate their peculiar institutions, or, at least, to keep slavery in good countenance against what seemed to them the meddlesome philanthropy of mankind. It had started out with this Democratic administration as the predominant element; but the Kansas-Nebraska bill of Douglas, which gave slavery an unexpected entrance into freedom's solemn reservations, distracted the glut of distant conquest. The wolf grew more ravenous than ever; but, ravenous in two different directions, he roused up enemies too mighty for him. The tangible results achieved in this foreign direction under the persistent lead of those earlier Presidents, Jackson, Tyler, and Polk, were achieved no longer. Northern Presidents looked wistfully up at the golden fruit, but they could not seize it. A sense of latent opposition throughout the North paralyzed their efforts. In the foreign policy of these next six years "I dare not" waited upon "I would."

In the caravan track of this nineteenth century over a vast continent, the Kansas-Nebraska act stands like a mould-stained pillar in a solitary waste, with its commemorative mockery of a noble principle,—the principle that the will of a community shall rule supreme. More truthfully does it mark the cowardly abnegation by Congress of its most tender and compassionate functions in the nourishment and education of young fledglings for Statehood — the mother's abandonment of her suckling child in the distant wilderness to the mercy of wolves and hyenas. This hypocrisy of leaving the first settlers to their own preferences, of generous feelings for slavery's sake, never accomplished the good predicted of it. Instead of peace to the Union, it brought a two-edged sword. Instead of stifling agitation on the social question, it only precipitated a struggle between sections growing bitter and more bitter,—a territorial civil war, in which government, while professing to keep the peace, helped the side it really favored. Never was there such active and costly

intervention by the United States in territorial affairs as in the effort to keep up its false hypothesis of non-intervention. And meanwhile from this dogma of squatter sovereignty sprouted a variety of other dogmas in exposition of it. National parties were broken and pulverized the first time the principle was put into practical operation.

The South, as we have observed, did not initiate this Kansas-Nebraska iniquity, but unwisely accepted as a blessing what Northern recreancy had proffered.* Very soon after Douglas's bill was reported in the Senate, the legislatures of Louisiana and Mississippi led off ^{1854.} in expressing approbation of the new plan which promised to quench agitation by withdrawing the topic of slavery from the floor of Congress. Almost solitary among slaveholders of this region in open dissent was Jere Clemens, lately a Senator from Alabama, who, besides condemning the flagrant breach of faith involved in the repeal of the Missouri compromise, opposed its principle of popular sovereignty as one which, in his judgment, would, when put to practice, shut out slavery from the territory as effectually as the Wilmot Proviso had done.† Such was not the prevalent opinion in the slave States.

The tide of Northern elections in the spring of 1855 continued adverse to the administration. A dormant session of Congress had not turned men's minds from the wrong already perpetrated. Ill-will was largely shown by supporting candidates in the several States which Native Americans put forward. In New Hampshire, the President's own State, where a year ^{1855,} April. before his party held full sway, a Know-Nothing was chosen Governor. Connecticut gave the Know-Nothings

* How far Jefferson Davis may have helped initiate this measure is considered *supra*, p. 282.

† In this opinion, Clemens said that he was sustained by President Pierce, who took occasion to say in his presence that the bill was a proposition in favor of freedom, and that if it passed there never could be another slave State added to the Union. Newspapers, March, 1854.

a plurality, and though in default of a majority the election went to the legislature, that body confirmed the preference. The vote was very light in Rhode Island, but overwhelmingly for the new party. In local and municipal elections all over the country this year, dislike of foreigners was now a prominent element. Such, in truth, February. was the extent of this feeling that in New York city a notorious bruiser, named Poole, an American and the leader of a gang of political bullies, who was attacked and mortally wounded by a rival gang to which belonged men of foreign birth, was followed to his grave by an immense procession, and honored, like some martyr for great principles, with a funeral oration.

Know-Nothingism did not take long to show the inherent meanness of its men and of its reformatory spirit. In the Massachusetts legislature this year a prying committee was appointed to visit a neighboring nunnery ; inquisitors of the people roamed about the private precincts of women, with jocular curiosity, entering the chamber of a sick girl who was confined to her bed ; and one of them was so indecently familiar with the matron of the establishment that, upon her complaint and an investigation, he was expelled from his seat.

But the signal accomplishment of this legislature was wrought by its Free Soil element. A personal liberty bill passed by a two-thirds vote over the Governor's veto ; it forbade all future aid of State officials, State troops, or State buildings in executing the fugitive-slave act ; it provided counsel for the arrested negro, and denounced penalties against the slave-hunter as a kidnapper, should he fail to make good his claim of service. In this the New England trait of colonial times was once more manifested, to circumvent oppression while scrupulously observing the letter of loyalty. For of this and the personal liberty laws which other States modelled upon it, there was fair ground for asserting that, while practically obstructing the execution of the fugitive-slave act, they did not transgress the Federal Constitution. Massachusetts thus washed its hands of all complicity in the restitution of men to

bondage. And the movement now commenced here in earnest, to be renewed every year until its end was accomplished, for the removal of Loring, the commissioner who had returned Anthony Burns to slavery, from his judgeship of probate. Upon the address of both houses of the legislature, the Governor had summary power to remove a State judge, and the personal liberty act forbade for the future that those concerned with fugitive-slave process should hold a Massachusetts office besides. Loring clung to his post; nor was Gardner, the Know-Nothing Governor, disposed to conform to the wishes of the legislature by striking at judicial independence.

Garrison abolitionists, headed by Wendell Phillips, aided the Free Soil sentiment of Massachusetts in compassing this obstruction of the fugitive-slave law and the removal of Judge Loring. But their eccentric course on matters of national concern made even the radical among Massachusetts Free Soilers sensitive at being classed with them,—their own means being constitutional, and their end the salvation of the Union. At a recent Independence-day celebration in the woods of Framingham, where Thoreau read a disturbing address, Garrison had emphasized his customary Catonian utterance, “the Union must be destroyed,” by burning publicly a copy of the Federal Constitution. The passage by Congress of the Kansas-Nebraska bill he hailed as a new impulse to secession. His nature did not flinch from consequences. “There is,” said the “Liberator,” “but one honest, straightforward course to pursue if we would see the slave power overthrown; the Union must be dissolved!”* And such was the general tenor of anniversary speeches and resolutions through the next six years, whenever and wherever meetings were held of our anti-slavery societies. So strenuous, indeed, was Garrison to stand upon the high platform of moral assertion, as one who kept truth clear of the contamination of free discussion, that he scornfully refused to take any part in a course of anti-slavery lectures at

* 3 W. L. Garrison's Life, 414.

Boston, where Southern men had been invited by the committee to present their personal opinions of slavery. As well, he wrote indignantly, might robbers be asked to state their views of robbery.*

Kansas now becomes the foreground of public interest, the battle-field where freedom and slavery gird up their loins and contend for the mastery. Of the two territories, Kansas and Nebraska, both of which were set apart for the new experiment of popular sovereignty, desecrated and driven from the sanctuary of that former decree which prohibited slavery altogether, Kansas was the more southerly, and from its situation the more suitable for planting institutions of bondage. It occupied nearly the same parallels as Virginia, and lay due west of the slave State of Missouri, whose boundaries were next adjacent. This

whole interior region of Kansas and Nebraska
^{1854.} had hitherto remained practically unsettled and little known; but its invitation was to agriculture, and peaceful rivers meandered through its soft scenery.†

Kansas presented a tame and uniform aspect of gently undulating ridges and valleys; its territory, as now defined, extending northward from our Indian reservations to the fortieth parallel of latitude, and west from the State of Missouri to the Rocky Mountains. In this broad parallelogram was embraced an area reckoned at about 126,000 square miles. At the passage of the Douglas bill, Kansas was an Indian reservation; and the fact that Indians would be despoiled of their rightful domains by erecting this territory was urged very strongly in debate by Everett, Bell, Houston, and others, who, timorous on the main issue involved in the bill, laid strong hold upon secondary objections.‡ About some scattered missions here of the

* Newspapers.

† The Indian name, "Nebraska," signified "shallow water;" and "Kansas" meant "smoky water." Each name was applied to a river. In Nebraska, whose settlement awaited chiefly the issue of the Kansas experiment, was speedily laid out the promising town of Omaha as the chief centre of population.

‡ *Supra*, p. 283.

Southern Methodist church, and on the farms of a few capricious squatters, slaves appear to have been worked for several years previously. Had Congress passed the territorial act anticipated, in compliance with the restrictions of 1820, that abuse would have been easily expelled. But now this compromise was rescinded, and Kansas might be admitted as a State, "with or without slavery," according to the option of its inhabitants hereafter.

Missouri was admitted a slave State in 1821, and Arkansas in 1836, in fulfilment of those compromise conditions of which the North was now denied its full equivalent. From the steps of the St. Louis court house, men and women, black, yellow, and light, were sold regularly to the highest bidder. Free-born negroes, who arrived at that flourishing city on the river steamers, were arrested, cooped up without a hearing, and auctioned off to pay the expenses of their detention. Slavery, however, was gradually growing uncongenial to that vicinity, for St. Louis gained rapidly in wealth and numbers, and among its population were many of German birth. Benton, though stranded by politics in his old age, partook somewhat of this liberal and progressive spirit. But reactionary leaders were at this time at the head of affairs, no one of them more strongly nor more passionately bent on slavery's new crusade than David R. Atchison, a Kentuckian by birth, who for some twelve years previous to 1855, when he resigned his seat, had served Missouri in the Senate of the United States. A man of good presence and approachable, Atchison rounded his career in national life as President *pro tem.* of the Senate, chosen by his compeers at a time when a pistol-shot or the stroke of sudden death at the White House would have installed him chief magistrate by succession. Most unfit would he have been for so solemn a contingency, for his talents were of coarse fibre; he was a strong partisan, and, though a ready stump orator, he had none of the higher pretensions to a statesman.

Identified with Missouri's western frontier rather than St. Louis, Atchison, while yet a Senator, had gone beyond

most slaveholders in trying to break down the barriers
of honor which hedged his State about with free
^{1854.} labor. Indeed, in a boastful speech to his constituents soon after the session of the Kansas-Nebraska measure, he gave himself the credit of originating that Missouri compromise repeal which Douglas in his memorable bill adopted.* The truth was that the region of Missouri to which Atchison belonged had long been uneasy and apprehensive over the prospect of an adjoining free State. A horde of savages they thought less dangerous neighbors than a race of free farmers. On this Missouri border abounded a medley and explosive population, typical of pro-slavery life in its ruder aspects. Mingled among the generous, hospitable, and moderately educated, were bravos and desperadoes, ready to die in their boots, — whiskey-drinking and trigger-pulling ruffians, not without amiable traits, but blindly led by inclination and habit, and full of that contempt of human suffering which human ownership engenders. White gentlemen and white trash here combined to push slavery together into Kansas the moment the Douglas measure gave legal opportunity for doing so. No sooner had President Pierce signed the fateful act which gave slave property a legal recognition than companies of these Missouri roisterers hastened over the borders and seized upon extensive tracts of the best lands for themselves. Several pro-slavery towns sprang up in the new territory, situated chiefly on the Missouri river just where it breaks the Kansas parallelogram on the northeast corner. Here was Kickapoo, blighted in the bud; Atchison, perpetuating to-day under brighter auspices the name of that bigoted colonizer for whom it was christened; Leavenworth, the prairie rose; and Lecompton, somewhat inland, which still droops under the weight of historical infamy. This sort of ferry immigration the Missourians thought would couple Kansas forever with the train of pro-slavery States. And so easy seemed their colonizing expedient that a large part of these first-comers

* Newspapers, October, 1854.

chose to retain their Missouri homes as before, prepared to cross and recross, and to rally reserves by the boat-load from all the neighboring counties whenever voting or fighting could aid the cause.*

While in the remote free States all was despondency,— while the dark-lantern imposture, with its grips and mysterious passwords, hindered the political combination of those opposed to the administration and its policy on the one really vital issue of the hour,— while abolitionists could contribute nothing to the Northern cause but that same panacea of secession which the Calhounists, high-priests of slavery, had offered from their Southern point of view, and which the great mass of the people abhorred,— and while timid Whigs and revolting Democrats, obedient to the call of duty, felt sorely perplexed over re-establishing the line of compromise already smirched as unconstitutional,— a Northern, and a Massachusetts man, with clear insight of the coming struggle, pointed the way to a solution of the problem in the territories. This was Eli Thayer, of Worcester, a veritable Yankee, shrewd, sharp-tongued, and pertinacious, not overburdened with sentiment, but ingenious in his methods and eminently practical.† His plan was to meet Douglas and the slave oligarchy upon their own ground, and, taking the equal chance offered for erecting the new territories into free States, proceed at once to colonize them with Northern laborers. To this cause there were strong and hopeful inducements. The North was vastly superior in the sinews of wealth and population, in facilities for transporting and distributing, and in the constant flux of hardy and intelligent immigrants. Slavery could contaminate, but it colonized very slowly by comparison; the impulse of free labor was useful to bring thrift and nimble enterprise into a wilderness where

* See Spring's Kansas, ch. 2, 3.

† Prominent Southern men have given Thayer full credit for frustrating the hopes which slavery cherished under the Kansas-Nebraska bill. See Wise's Decades, 243.

immense difficulties must be overcome. And, if natural conditions meant anything, Kansas and Nebraska, each so well adapted to wheat-raising and pasturage, were the gift of nature to a race of Northern farmers.

Before the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska bill and when its fate was still in suspense, Thayer broached his

^{March.} plan before an indignation meeting called by his fellow-citizens ; and, encouraged by their spontaneous applause, he drew up the charter of the "Massachusetts Emigrant Aid Company," and carried it through the

^{April.} Massachusetts legislature. The original enter-

prise was a wholesale and magnificent one, and Thayer meant to make it a paying one in the pecuniary sense, for he was not above declaring dividends upon the projects of philanthropy. With a capital fixed at \$5,000,000, the company proposed to bring emigration to the West into an organized system ; to plant freedom and the comforts and accessories of a free colony together ; in the first place, to make of Kansas a free State, and then to sell out, and select and settle some other field, and so go on until every possible area of the Union became reclaimed by the genius of free labor. "It is much better," argued Thayer, "to go and do something for free labor than to stay at home and talk of manacles and auction-blocks and bloodhounds, while deplored the never-ending aggressions of slavery." *

The public were sceptical about embarking in this project ; and the more so because, as a money venture, there were plainly two sides to it. But several Massachusetts citizens of wealth and influence took a decided interest in it, among them John M. S. Williams, Charles Francis Adams,

^{May-June.} and Amos A. Lawrence. Edward Everett Hale,

a young clergyman, was an earnest friend of this promising experiment, and a brave and sagacious man was found for managing agent in Charles Robinson, who had been schooled to experience among the argonauts of California. Horace Greeley, upon Thayer's personal solicita-

* Thayer's Kansas Crusade, c. 2.

tion, gave freely the large influence of his name and newspaper to the new crusade. But no organization was ever effected under the broad original charter. Trustees managed the concern until the next year, when a second charter was obtained from the Massachusetts legislature, which broadened the opportunities to subscribe, but reduced the sphere of operations and the individual risks of those concerned in it. Of "The New England Emigrant Aid Society," John Carter Brown, of Providence, was President, and Eli Thayer the first Vice-President, and, in a long list of honorary directors, some of the most substantial names in the New-England States were represented. The company, as thus organized, devoted itself to the task, sufficiently arduous, of planting free-labor towns in Kansas; and, aided by contributions of about \$140,000 in the course of three years' operations, it adjusted itself to the usual basis of a benefaction, without the hope of pecuniary return.*

Meanwhile, under disheartening difficulties, the men who held up the hands of the original company had made good their challenge to slavery's propagators. In July the first company of emigrants from Massachusetts to Kansas passed by rail through the Empire State, drawing crowds to the way stations, attracting notice from the press, and inspiring the whole North to emulate their example. The fame of this colonial enterprise drew attention far and wide; its capital, reputed at what the original charter called for, gave an exaggerated estimate of its financial ability, and hundreds of wavering pioneers were stimulated to follow where a company supposed to be so rich and so powerful led the way. Along the whole route from Boston to Kansas these colonizing parties were swelled by accessions, and at the close of December, 1854, Kansas territory held a population of several thousand sons of freedom. The inspirational force of Thayer and his parent company led presently to the formation of hundreds of Kansas leagues and Kansas

* Thayer's Kansas Crusade, ch. 3, 4; Spring's Kansas, c. 3.

committees in our Northern States, all loyal to one another, all combined for a common purpose. This was, perhaps, the first attempt in the world's history to systematize and soften by beneficent aids the colonizing of a distant territory; and the secret of success in such an emigration was co-operative sympathy,—or, as Charles Sumner afterwards pointed out, that instead of leaving a pioneer race to grope blindly, the fostering company went forward, “and planted capital in advance of population.”*

Such is the jealousy with which even philanthropists are prone to regard the ameliorating schemes devised by others, that scarcely an anti-slavery man of the extreme type with which the country had grown so familiar could be found to say a good word for this Thayer experiment. Colonization to such theorists was “false in principle,” able to compass at best only “a transplanted Massachusetts.” For years they continued to speak of free Kansas as a failure; its fate they insisted was sealed “the very moment the Missouri compromise was repealed.”† Far different forebodings filled the minds of those more practical politicians, the Missouri borderers, as they saw freedom’s battalions arriving in turn, who pitched their tents towards the rich bottom lands, close to that tributary of the coiling water-course on the northeast, known as the Kansas River. They saw with dismay Hottentot huts and

1854. mud-plastered log-cabins marking the first site of

anti-slavery towns in their rear; Lawrence, which was named in honor of the treasurer and moneyed benefactor of the “Emigrant Aid Company,” being the earliest thus founded, and Osawatomie, with Topeka, following not much later. Atchison, the demagogue statesman, took the stump betimes to warn his fellow-citizens that Missouri institutions, as well as those of the territory, were in danger from these “philanthropic knaves.” Stringfellow,

* Speech in Senate, May 19, 1856.

† See citations in Spring’s Kansas, 29; Thayer’s Kansas Crusade, 109.

his jackal and a rural pettifogger, hurried to the nation's capital early the next winter to arrange a counter-colonization for slavery's behest, and beat the Yankees at the unexpected game. This latter plan, Southern Congressmen most generously indorsed, but the working resources were beyond their power to furnish.* To colonization, in fact, the South, with the negro race on its back, moved incumbered like an armadillo, and for anything which resembled business rivalry that section was no competitor. To politics rather, with its crafts and chicanery, which the slave aristocracy quite thoroughly understood, was committed the destiny of Kansas; and border ruffianism undertook to play out its hand with a strong confidence that the resources of the government would be used to help it sweep the board.

The first territorial governor of Kansas, whom the President appointed soon after the passage of the Douglas bill, was Andrew H. Reeder, of Pennsylvania. He entered upon his official duties, sound to the core in Democratic principles, enthusiastic in the new faith of squatter sovereignty, loyal towards the administration, and withal an affable, ambling administrator, and a ready orator. Arriving at Fort Leavenworth in October, he declared ^{October.} himself opposed to the spirit of violence which was already astir in the territory; and with the laudable object of soothing the rival camps of freedom and slavery, besides informing himself, he began by a general tour of the settlements. The election of a territorial ^{November.} delegate to Congress presently brought into view the prearranged tactics of the Missouri borderers. Whitfield, a Tennessean, who held the office of Indian agent, was chosen by fraudulent ballots. Elections for the territorial legislature having been postponed until the following spring, a wider and more outrageous interference with the sovereignty of the genuine settlers was exhibited. Atchison and Stringfellow, the latter of whom had set up a newspaper, inflamed their Missouri neighbors to outvote

* Spring's Kansas, 27.

and suppress these interlopers of the "Emigrant Aid Society," whose "five million fund" they imagined already raised, "to send out paupers and steal niggers." "Blue lodges," a secret pro-slavery order in Western Missouri, aided the mission work for the South and her institutions. On a memorable spring day, the 30th of March, a pictur-

1855. esque mob of these unwashed and greasily dressed
March 30. lords of creation crossed into Kansas from their State, marched to the polls with guns, revolvers, and improvised weapons for assault, and deposited their ballots with generous profusion for the pro-slavery candidates, wherever such ballots appeared needful. These scarecrow invaders had been carefully drilled; the free-State settlers (who had not thought of providing themselves yet with shooting implements) were not molested unless they showed fight; and judges of election who scrupled to receive their illegal votes, instead of meekly yielding, were the only ones they took the pains to displace. Hundreds of these "returning emigrants" marched back through the frontier city of Independence the next day, to the bray of brass bands, cheered by their Missouri compatriots, and regaled upon strong liquors. And, indeed, those popular sovereigns had done no half-way work; for, in a new territory, whose census, taken the month before, showed a population of 8,501, of whom 2,905 were qualified voters, 6,307 votes were plumped into the ballot-boxes on this 30th of March,—nearly eighty per cent of them cast by the straddlers from Missouri. It is needless to say that pro-slavery candidates were almost everywhere elected.*

Governor Reeder canvassed the returns and listened to the many protests. Free-State men, somewhat April, May. overawed, did not, in all instances, fight their local contests sharply; and their concert was rather to insist that this whole election should be cancelled, and a new one ordered under more vigilant precautions. Reeder braved fairly the pro-slavery gentry, whose threats were

* Spring's Kansas, 45; Tribune Almanac.

not pleasant to hear. While on a flying visit to Pennsylvania, he made a public speech, in which he stated very plainly that the principle of popular sovereignty had been trampled on, and that Kansas had been invaded and conquered by an armed force from beyond her borders. But in official action he showed himself hampered by the wishes of his rulers at Washington. He did not set the whole election aside, but confined his disapproval to certain candidates, against whom protests had been filed. At supplementary elections, held on the 22d of May, the free-State men easily filled the vacancies by men of their own choice. But the territorial legislature still stood pro-slavery by more than two to one.*

Behold, now, the first of territorial assemblies where slave and free systems of labor were to contend by gentle rivalry for popular recognition. This Kansas legislature, which convened at Pawnee, had no such admirable spectacle to offer. The majority showed its brutal scorn of the governor, whose opening message was a homily upon fraternity, by turning out nine free-State members in a twinkling, and seating every claimant to whom Reeder had refused credentials; the solitary tenth retired of his own accord from an atmosphere wholly uncongenial. Next this legislature adjourned to Shawnee Mission, in defiance of the governor's wishes, and made with him an issue of strength. He angrily refused to sanction their bills. They, in return, backed by potent influences at Washington, arraigned him as one who was financially interested in the town-site they had seen fit to vacate. Upon similar charges, which his enemies had already preferred against him, the President virtually removed Reeder from office; but the real cause of his displacement, we may suspect, was that he obstructed the wishes of those who had set themselves upon making Kansas, by honest means or foul, a slave State.

Fortified by a decision of the territorial Supreme Court which sustained the right of the legislature to remove the

* Spring's Kansas, c. 4.

capital, these Solons of Shawnee Mission exercised their representative functions in a remarkable manner. Hobnob was their word, give it or take it; and though without much natural gift for code-making, they did their best for barbarism. Death was denounced against any one who assisted a slave to escape from his master, or for inciting a slave rebellion by speaking, writing, or printing. To deny the right of holding slaves in this territory was declared felonious; and, to decline taking oath to support the fugitive-slave law was made sufficient cause for disfranchisement. But whoever would pay one dollar, and swear by that law (which Congress had never once dreamed of imposing as a voting test) and by the whole of the Kansas territorial bill, might be permitted to cast a vote without regard to residence. To the county courts, all of which were now in the hands of slaveholders, was committed the exclusive appointment of all election officers. Six years was the tenure fixed for the local officials thrust by this legislature into power; and, by a blundering violation of the act of Congress, the governor was deprived of all power to pardon.* In short, this Shawnee Mission code was as bigoted and besotted a specimen of legislative joinery as ever in American experience travestied the great fundamentals of local self-government.

But the free-State settlers did not submit tamely to this state of things. Led by Charles Robinson, now a fellow-pioneer, and the best of the whole community for keeping them faithful to high ideals, they struck out a bold line of policy, not wholly prudent, perhaps, since it embroiled them with the national authorities, and gave all the minions of slavery a pretext for charging them with lawlessness and civil revolution. That policy was, to leave territorial governor and legislature to crawl on their course, bearing their foul draggletail of fraudulent legitimacy,—to plunge bravely into the wilderness, and gain the highroad of Statehood by whatever means they might,

* Spring's Kansas, c. 4.

trusting that Congress and the generous friends of free territory would give sanction to their efforts. It was a leaf from Robinson's California experience, though there the conditions for leaping the chasm of territorial childhood had been much more favorable. After sending home for a supply of Sharpe's rifles,—for they now saw clearly that ballots without bullets were inadequate to protect the will of the majority,—these denizens for free soil, at a convention assembled at Lawrence on the 14th of August, repudiated utterly the spurious legislature which Missouri ruffians had imposed upon them, and summoned a second convention for the 5th of September at Big Springs. On the 19th of the same month a third convention of the free-State settlers followed at Topeka. By these three conventions the anti-Missouri elements of the territory were well combined, and independent dates fixed for holding the necessary elections.

At the Big Springs gathering, Reeder, the late governor, whose removal from office left him master of his own opinions, and who now fell in with the free-soil immigrants, received with one accord the nomination for delegate to Congress. The election day fixed by these revolutionists was October 9th, while that ordered by the Shawnee Mission legislature was the first day of the month. On the day last mentioned came the perambulators from Missouri, less numerous than before, but prepared to vote oftener; Whitfield, their candidate, polled a pro-slavery vote of about 2,800, which left census figures far behind. On the 9th, pursuant to their own plans, the free-State settlers voted, their adversaries now keeping from the polls as they had done before; Reeder, by a more honest count, footed some 2,400. Dissenting ballots, of course, were rare enough on either election-day.

The free-State party had taken a stride still longer, in pursuing their purpose to bring the issue of popular rights directly before the North and their sympathizing friends in the coming Congress. An offshoot from their latest Topeka gathering was a solemn delegate convention, to

meet in the same town, with the intent of forming a State Constitution, and applying at once for admission into the Union. Delegates were chosen to this convention on the same day that Reeder was voted for ; and, near the end of ^{October 23-} November 11th. Radical, revolutionary even, though their course might be, these settlers were by no means the negro-worshippers Missouri took them for, but crusted with conservatism to the usual thickness fashionable in these days among plain citizens, who loved their Union first and liberty afterwards. Their choice of Reeder had indicated that Douglas Democrats, who would practise as they preached, were welcome brethren. James H. Lane, who presided over this convention, and had gained previously a considerable influence, was, like nearly half of the delegates, a national Democrat, and one who, in his affection for the old flag, was quite willing to fritter away time in trying to convince obtuse borderers that he cared very little for the negro. A pioneer from Indiana, of military experience, and not without fair talents in the rough, Lane clashed occasionally with Robinson, a man of admirable reserve and sagacity, who had real anti-slavery convictions besides. Robinson defeated a proposal from the Lane faction, that the convention should indorse the Nebraska bill ; and a tolerably good Constitution, which proposed to eradicate slavery gently in the course of two years, was finally adopted. Negroes, bond or free, were excluded alike ; and there were other features of the plan which pursued Lane's favorite idea of showing mankind that they who wished to make Kansas a free State were not the fanatics they were thought.* On the 15th of December, this Topeka Constitution was ratified at the polls by 1,731 to 46 ; pro-slavery legitimists and voters of the pro-slavery towns ignoring it altogether.† It so happened that Wilson Shannon, of Ohio, the new

* This whole matter of negro exclusion was finally referred to the Kansas settlers, who voted by nearly three to one to keep negroes out.

† Newspapers; Spring's Kansas, c. 5.

governor, whom President Pierce had sent out to supersede Reeder, arrived at Shawnee Mission in early September. He was a man of good repute, who, besides other honorable trusts, had twice held office as governor of his State. As one of the Ohio representatives in Congress, he had voted for the Douglas bill, and lost his re-election in consequence. The free-State movement had gained headway, with the aid of Reeder's influence, before this new governor appeared on the scene; and Shannon, though meaning well, began his rule by putting himself at once so unequivocally on the side of the slave-holders and the Dogberry legislature of Shawnee Mission, before allowing himself time to look into the difficult snarl of the situation, that the career of pacifier, which he would afterwards have preferred, was denied to him. Revolutionists, traitors, fomentors of civil war, he proclaimed, in an intemperate speech at Leavenworth, were all who had gone counter to the legitimate legislature and tried to set up a constitution of their own.* And true was it, indeed, that Douglas's boasted principle of popular option between slavery and freedom had produced, on its very first practical application to our national domain, a collision of systems so violent that settlers of the one faith and the other refused to live in harmony, or yield obedience to the wishes of the majority on either side. Between the Shawnee Mission legislature and the Topeka convention was forced a civil war, which Congress and the Federal Government, so far from indulging in the luxurious ease of non-intervention, would be forced to assist speedily on the one side or the other. Those miserable expedients by which a nation seeks to push aside the dreaded duty, make its task in the end a hundred-fold more dangerous and difficult.

The political tide continued to run against the administration in the Northern States, as it had been running ever since the repeal of the Missouri

1855.

* Spring's Kansas, c. 6.

compromise. Old statesmen of moderate views were swept aside; new men took the current, too earnest or else too narrow-minded to accommodate; the coming era called for courage more than the negotiating disposition. But it was very hard to fuse the incongruous fragments of opposition, and hardest of all to induce old Whig compromisers, whose past association had been with the highest talents and respectability, and who continued firm in the tradition that there could be no enduring Union without self-abasement, to mingle in the meaner heterogeneous company of hare-brained theorists, one-idea enthusiasts, radicals, and unprincipled adventurers, who had no national standing. Though Native-Americanism had as little to boast of in the way of great statesmen as any political movement our people ever affiliated with, its leaders had the ready wit to attract these old-fashioned Union-savers, to whom the times seemed so out of joint. It lamented all agitation as destructive, and spread its national wings like those of our emblematic bird, so that one pinion should point over each section. In June a national Know-Nothing convention had been held at Philadelphia, with closed doors; its secret majority determined to ignore the question of slavery in the territories, and make no grievance of the Missouri compromise repeal. This action led Henry Wilson, Thomas Ford, and many other Northern delegates of influence to secede from the order, and made genuine Free Soilers all the more strenuous to break the party up. But deplored patriots welcomed it as a bulwark against sectional strife, and in various inconclusive State elections of the present year—in Massachusetts, Louisiana, Maryland, and even in New York—the Know-Nothings won temporary triumphs. By throwing overboard their regalia and their principles, as local occasion might require, they kept a considerable influence among the milder slave States, where Whig prepossessions had not utterly perished; in some quarters embracing all good Catholics who were native-born; in others, welcoming all citizens of foreign birth whose religion was Protestant.

Two State elections of the present year excited much

national interest. Virginia, tired of old-fogydom, chose Henry A. Wise governor, after a spirited canvass which made reform its watchword. The victory was a Democratic one, by which Native-Americans were worsted; but Wise, as a man of active and ambitious energy, original and vigorous, whose prime had been long eclipsed in the clouds of Tylerism, gave hope of a brilliant and independent career, which experience unhappily did not realize. In Ohio, Salmon P. Chase, that splendid Democrat who had confronted the Douglas bill in the Senate, led the anti-Nebraska host to a noble victory under the Northwestern and Jeffersonian style of "Republican." Here Native-Americans were kindly conciliated; and Ford, the bolting delegate of that order at Philadelphia, took the second place on the combined ticket for a genuine anti-slavery victory. Chase's election as governor over Medill, the Democratic candidate, by a plurality nearly as great as that by which Pierce prevailed over Scott for President three years earlier, and that, too, in the face of hunker Whigs who interposed a candidate of their own, was the flaming omen of the year.*

The thirty-fourth Congress met as a divided legislature, the Senate under control still of the administration, but the House in the hands of adversaries. Two pure marble wings of the new capitol extension, a northern and a southern one, were seen approaching their completion; but ere the new symmetry of this temple could be complete, the whole central round would need rebuilding. What new and loftier dome was destined to replace the old cupola, too squat, too contracted, to befit an expanding age? These things were an allegory.

Recall in that north chamber of oratory, to be tenanted a brief space longer, the great statesmen departed,—Clay, Webster, Calhoun, Forsyth, Wright, and the lesser brethren of the tomb. Of their compeers now retired, Benton,

* See Tribune Almanac, 1856. Chase's plurality over Medill was 15,550. The legislature chosen was Republican by more than two to one.

Tyler, Rives, and Corwin were among the living. Cass still sat in this body, somnolent and blinking, but a healthy veteran, with unwrinkled face; Clayton, jovial to life's close; the generous Bell; Crittenden, older and sadder as time went on, like one whose thoughts were in the retrospect. Of younger men, Toombs, Douglas, Slidell, Hamlin, Hale, and Seward, were faces familiar. Recent elections by the State legislatures had made some changes in this body. Slidell had been re-elected for a new term; so, too, had Seward, and that, too, in the teeth of an opposition by Native-Americans which was mean and spiteful. Massachusetts, forsaking her proud traditions, gave the seat which Webster had once occupied to the Natick cobbler, Henry Wilson, Free Soil Whig, Free Soil Know-Nothing, and an indefatigable worker in such temporary coalitions as had brought Sumner to the Senate before him;* it was the seat which Everett had lately resigned, whose politics were not robust enough for these tempestuous times, and who had offended an exacting constituency by being unfortunately absent when the roll was called on the Kansas-Nebraska bill. Illinois sent Lyman Trumbull, a slight, keen-faced man, of broad intellectual grasp, and an anti-Nebraska Democrat. Anti-Nebraska changes had occurred in Wisconsin and Iowa. William Pitt Fessenden, of Maine, with earnest and refined face, was a champion of freedom, still earlier chosen. Among other anti-Nebraska senators were Hamlin, Fessenden's colleague, Wade, of Ohio, and Foote and Collamer, of Vermont. Administration Democrats were in a decreasing majority. Atchison having already withdrawn from Congressional life, Jesse D. Bright, of Indiana, one of the most constant parasites of slavery, was chosen to preside in his place.

Turmoil and contention marked rather the other wing of Congress, where the wreck and dissolution of old national parties, which the Kansas-Nebraska bill hastened, had set floating a large and discordant opposition. How

* Wilson sat in the preceding session, succeeding Rockwell, the Whig appointed by Governor Washburn upon Everett's resignation, and chosen by the legislature over Winthrop.

wonderful the change in this House of Representatives since the memorable measures of 1850. Virginia and South Carolina, it is true, had not varied much in their delegations; while, on Georgia's list, Cobb and Stephens were still the most conspicuous, both hardening into aggressive pro-slavery Democrats, and flinging concession aside. But New England and the middle States had changed greatly in the complexion of their Representatives, while the roll of the great Northwest spangled all over with strange names. Strangers to national life and to one another answered as their names were called,—the earliest fragments of leadership thrown out in the late political upheaval, and men for the most part of no lasting fibre. With such a House, sensitive to an inner rivalry between the foes to the administration of Free Soil and Know-Nothing proclivities, a long and unprecedented struggle took place for the choice of a Speaker, which occupied two months of the session. For, December 3-^{1855,} while Anti-Nebraska men had the clear plurality ^{1856,} February 2. over administration Democrats, a third set, consisting of Whigs and Southern Know-Nothings, foes to all agitation, could deprive them of a majority. Not less than five candidates registered on the first ballot: William A. Richardson, Democrat, of Illinois, 74; Lewis D. Campbell, Anti-Nebraska, of Ohio, 53; Humphrey Marshall, Democrat and Know-Nothing, of Kentucky, 30; Nathaniel P. Banks, Anti-Nebraska, of Massachusetts, 21; and Henry M. Fuller, National Know-Nothing, of Pennsylvania, 17; besides twenty-nine scattering votes for various other candidates. Twenty-three ballots were cast with about the same result, excepting that the National Know-Nothings gradually concentrated upon Fuller. Before the twenty-fourth ballot was cast, Campbell, on the 7th of December, withdrew, having polled his full strength, and the Anti-Nebraska members united upon Banks, whose antecedents and character made him a more acceptable candidate. Banks was the product of Massachusetts coalition, which brought other self-made men, like himself, into great prominence, whose first political record was a medley.

Early in life a factory boy, he had worked his way forward, much aided by an impressive dignity of presence, a sonorous utterance, and a remarkable capacity for being popular with all men. Democratic in sympathies, he had yet a dash of conservatism in action which suited well the times. Known in these next five years as the "iron man," and having both civil and military aptitude for administration, Banks promised a career quite remarkable, which hidden limitations kept him from achieving to the full extent, the soil being more rich than deep; but he was always a good citizen. Though commencing now but a second term in Congress, he had presided in his native State in legislature and convention with rare tact and self-poise. Cheered by his admirable bearing, Banks's supporters stood firmly by him, now that the struggle began in earnest; but six votes were wanting at the best to secure him a majority. Richardson, the Democratic competitor, withdrew formally on the 23d of January, taking his last chances upon the one hundred and twenty-second ballot. The friends of the administration next united upon James L. Orr, of South Carolina; but nothing was gained by the change. No candidate could gain a majority; and, various other expedients failing, it was resolved, on the 2d of February, that, after three more ineffectual ballots, a plurality should elect. The one hundred and thirty-third ballot brought Banks accordingly into the chair by a vote of 103,—William Aiken, a rice planter of South Carolina, and a loyal citizen without reproach, receiving 100 as the next competitor, while 11 votes remained scattered. William Cullom, of Tennessee, was chosen clerk, and legislation began its tardy course. It was to the credit of the House that, through all this lengthy controversy there had been no personal violence, no breach of decorum.*

The new Speaker's appointments were fairly and judiciously made. Campbell was the chairman of the ways and means; and besides Quitman, of Mississippi, who now

* Congressional Globe.

appeared in Congress for the first time, a model of dignified decorum, a few opponents of the Anti-Nebraska force by whom Banks had been chosen were placed at the head of the less important committees. Banks's rulings in the chair were impartial; and not one of his decisions while his term lasted appears to have been overruled.

Under these extraordinary circumstances the President had sent in his annual message on the last day of December, and while the House remained unorganized. 1855, It was received and read in the Senate, but the December 31. House laid the document upon the table.

Let us take up the tale of foreign relations with this message, which gave precedence to the situation with Great Britain. British enlistments for the Crimean war had been attempted at Philadelphia and other Atlantic cities, in violation of the neutrality laws. But our administration checked the effort vigorously, and demanded the recall of Minister Crampton, who was implicated in the offence. Indeed, there was a belligerent tone to the President's message, which complained of British interference in the affairs of this continent besides. The British West India squadron had been reinforced for the purpose, as London journals expressed it, of supplying the ability, which the American government seemed to lack, of enforcing its own laws against Southern filibustering. Our President's message was peremptory in tone, and gave prominence to the misunderstanding which had arisen between the two countries over the interpretation of the Clayton-Bulwer treaty.* But the excitement soon subsided. The British ministry disavowed the hostile intent of its West Indian squadron which the London journals imputed, and admitted that in the affair of enlistments the United States had strong grounds of complaint. While the Queen's speech, when Parliament opened in January, 1856, made no allusion to relations with the United States, the ministry made soothing ex-

* *Supra*, p. 254.

planations. "There is no country," said the Earl of Derby in the House of Lords, "with which Great Britain is so closely bound, and none with which a war would be so mutually suicidal."* After some further correspondence with Great Britain over the recruitment

May. question, our government dismissed Minister Crampton and the British consuls at New York, Philadelphia, and Cincinnati. England had proposed arbitration on the Central American imbroglio, but our President declined to submit the interpretation of the Clayton-Bulwer treaty to a third power.

American policy in the Central American region was not, after all, so disinterested or humane that foreign nations should have felt forced to respect it. Our Southern school of statesmen advanced rapidly in its apotheosis of the Saxon pedigree. Philosophic filibustering, agreeably to the views of the day, might be defined as the absorption of weaker races by the stronger, in fulfilment of some law of natural survival. "I believe," wrote Quitman, while framing the platform which elected him to the present House, "that the institution of slavery is not only right and proper, but the natural and normal condition of the superior and inferior races when in contact;" as "the chief element" of our country's prosperity, it should have the fostering care of the general government; and it is "a right and duty" not to restrain but to encourage the Caucasian white race to carry, permanently, civilization and progress to the rich and fertile countries south of us.†

Upon some such theory, no doubt, of his exalted mis-

* See newspapers of the day. American journals stated that the British enlistment difficulty and the determination to demand Minister Crampton's recall was the true reason why the President's message was sent into Congress before the end of December. Its publication was made just in season to go at once by steamer to Great Britain, and circulate in that country before the assembling of Parliament in the latter part of January.

† 2 Claiborne's Quitman, 211.

sion, had William Walker, after his first discomfiture in Lower California,* levied private war anew in the more auspicious and remote domain of Nicaragua. Its inter-oceanic importance, much exaggerated in those days, tempted private amateurs, like nations, to essay the conqueror. By profession a doctor and journalist, Walker, like Houston, whom he emulated, was a vagrant from Tennessee, though identified more lately with California. Lending himself to one of those insurrectionary chieftains, in which these Spanish-American republics so unfortunately abounded, he arrived in the summer of 1855, with a band of congenial adventurers, from the United States, and, after some trivial fights, contrived to get a peace patched up in October which recognized Rivas, the head of the faction he served, as president, and himself as commander-in-chief. For a season all went swimmingly. Southern adventurers hastened as recruits of the Nicaraguan army; and, while our half-sympathizing administration searched, prosecuted, and asserted the neutrality laws with noisy activity in the port of New York, American filibusters sailed with little or no hindrance from New Orleans and San Francisco to join the new standard of invasion. Walker, by various plundering contrivances, managed to supply his followers with money, clothing, and munitions; Rivas was chosen President of Nicaragua by some pretentious poll of the people, but his sway was merely nominal, and Walker himself was the real ruler of Nicaragua. Father Vijil, a priest, was next despatched to Washington, as diplomatic agent, and the question was whether to receive him officially, and thus recognize the Walker government. The cabinet was divided on the question, May. Marey strongly resisting; but Pierce yielded to the pro-slavery pressure, and on the 14th of May received the false minister with distinction and cordiality.† Southern conservatives, like Northern men, condemned the Presi-

* *Supra*, p. 297.

† President's special message; Congressional Globe.

dent's precipitate step, which, as we shall soon see, did not keep Walker propped long in his usurpation.*

But these foreign topics were but of minor consequence in presence of that inner turbulence which could not be quelled. Territorial sovereignty took the foreground in all men's thoughts; should Kansas come in a free or a slave State, was the burning question of the day. Through December, our administration had reserved its views. Governor Shannon's request for regular troops to assist him in suppressing the outlaws induced no immediate action. In his annual message, our young Hyperion passed Kansas by with a brief and sober suggestion. But

^{January.} late in January, and while the House was still casting its fruitless ballots for Speaker, Pierce sent into Congress a special message reviewing the whole situation in Kansas, and recommending a drastic treatment. The whole tone of this document was intensely partisan, and offensive to anti-slavery sentiment; it assailed Reeder, denounced the emigrant aid societies, upheld the legislature of Shawnee Mission, with all its mediaeval enactments, as a lawful body, however fraudulent might have been its origin, and impeached the whole free-State movement as treasonable, the machination of a party and not the people, which, if once reaching the point of organized resistance, the Federal government must positively suppress. In short, this message took ground upon the strict letter of legality, ignoring all aspects of the majority's wishes or of moral right. Anti-Nebraska men listened to its strain of scolding censure with indignant amazement.†

This was a year of incidents that made the blood curdle. The President's opening message, which discoursed at great length upon constitutional government, dispensed a

* Newspapers; Congressional Globe.

† Congressional Globe; message, Jan. 24, 1856. It was generally believed that Cushing and Jefferson Davis of his advisers aided the President in the preparation of this message, and that it served as Pierce's bid for a renomination at the approaching convention.

reprimand to Massachusetts for obstructing the fugitive-slave law. That law still worked its foul ends in other States; for almost the very day that this Kansas message was read in the two Houses, a few fugitives, who had crossed the Ohio river, were arrested on the free soil of Cincinnati; and a negro mother, one of the arrested band, killed her sucking child rather than have it sent back to bondage. Debates in Congress on the Kansas question, inflamed by the Executive tirade, were bitter in their scope and strongly personal. Charles Sumner concluded a brilliant and elaborate phillipic in the Senate May 20, 22. on the 20th of May, having commented severely in the course of it upon the conduct of Butler, of South Carolina, and other opponents in the chamber. His shafts struck deeply, for he sent them straight and polished at the point with all the force of a scornful scholarship; and perhaps for that very reason others were provoked to transgress, as he had not done, the bounds of parliamentary constraint. Two days after this speech the Senate had adjourned early, and Sumner sat writing alone at his desk, when two hot Carolinians of the House — Brooks and Keitt — entered the folding-doors, each armed with a cane. "You have libelled the State of South Carolina and my aged relative," said the former, who was a nephew of Senator Butler; and, before the Senator could rise from his seat, he struck him violently upon the head with his cane, following this by blow after blow upon his victim's person, until the thick gutta-percha weapon was broken to pieces; while Sumner, bewildered by the very first stroke, fell bleeding and unconscious to the floor, from which friends hastening into the chamber removed him. Brooks, before whom Keitt had brandished his cane to keep others off, was seized and quieted. Not for years was the Massachusetts Senator able to resume his public duties; he travelled, and visited Europe for medical relief; but the legislature of his State, in the meantime, showed a just sense of this outrage upon the freedom of debate by re-electing him for a new term and suffering his desk to remain unoccupied.

The poison of caste and false chivalry which slavery had instilled into our national politics was revealed by the inertness with which Sumner's fellow-Senators regarded this disgraceful assault. Douglas, who was on the scene in time to interfere, explained that his motives, had he done so, might have been misconstrued. Slidell

^{May.} excused himself similarly; Toombs admitted that

he had commended the assault; while Butler, whose absence, when Sumner spoke severely of him, had served the excuse of Brooks's assault, distinctly intimated in a speech upon his return that he would like to have competed with his "gallant relative" for the glory of chastising the offender. Brooks himself challenged Sumner's colleague, Henry Wilson, for speaking afterwards of the affair; and Wilson, while refusing to fight, gave notice that, if bodily attacked, he was prepared to defend himself. The action taken by Congress to vindicate its own honor fell quite short of the occasion. On the evening after the assault was committed, the Republican senators met and agreed what to do if no Democrat should move an investigation. The contingency came to pass; Wilson stated to the Senate the outrage his colleague had suffered; and, after a dead pause, Seward arose to make the motion which only Republicans were prepared to offer. The Senate elected a committee to investigate, from which all Republicans were excluded, and which finally shirked the whole issue by denying its jurisdiction. But the House took up the breach of dignity committed across the rotunda by two of its own members. A resolution for Brooks's expulsion failed of the needful two-thirds vote, though receiving a majority; but Keitt was censured, and both Brooks and Keitt resigned their seats. Constituents of the Palmetto State held to their own false code of honor, and both the assailant and his adjutant were re-elected in full approval.*

Events in far-off Kansas hastened rapidly to the collision of civil war. On the 15th of January following

^{1856.} the adoption of the Topeka constitution by the free-

* Newspapers of the day; 2 Seward's Biography (1856).

State settlers, Charles Robinson was chosen governor in pursuance of its provisions, and a free-State legislature assembled at Topeka, the temporary capital, on the 4th of March, but, after inaugurating the new government, adjourned to July. It was this audacious adaptation of the new dogma of squatter sovereignty that roused the rage of the President's January message, of which we have spoken. In that message the whole Topeka movement was denounced as an act of rebellion; and an Executive proclamation, which followed on the 11th of February, gave official and explicit warning that all such opposition to the lawful authorities of the territory would be put down by the military arm of the Union. Governor Shannon was authorized unequivocally to employ our regulars stationed at Fort Leavenworth, to force upon the whole body of the inhabitants the code of the Shawnee Mission legislature. In all this policy the territorial court, officered by violent minions of slavery, was an eager ally. Colonel Sumner, of the United States army, forcibly dispersed the Topeka legislature when it reassembled. Under the passionate charge of Lecompte, the Chief Justice, who would have graced the dock better than the bench, Robinson, Lane, Reeder, and others conspicuous in the free-State movement, were indicted for high treason; the first-named was arrested and held a close prisoner, while the others escaped. A grand jury found bills against free-State newspapers; and an obnoxious deputy being shot at while making some of his partisan arrests, the pro-slavery settlers, who had worked themselves into a frenzy to "clean out the abolitionists," joined a strange posse which the marshal summoned on the borders to march in force against the little town of Lawrence. A regiment of Southern volunteers brought by one Buford from Alabama, not so much to colonize as to help drive out Northern settlers from Kansas, joined the armed and unruly gang that pretended to aid the service of civil process. The Lawrence settlers were leaderless; in vain did they yield peaceably to the marshal and his arrests, surrendering besides their cannon and arms. The posse broke pell-

mell into the town, with riot, plunder, and devastation. Brutally wrathful against inanimate symbols of freedom, they battered, blew up, and burned the free-State hotel of the place, destroyed the printing-presses, committed Robinson's dwelling to the flames, and, like true rogues in grain, robbed and ransacked the stores and private houses

with unwashed hands.* Such was the calamity

May 21. which befell the little town planted by New England care and capital, on the very day after Sumner had spoken that speech on the Senate floor, for which he was laid weltering in his blood. It might be in the name of judicial process, or it might be in the name of offended honor, but slavery upheld its cause spontaneously with the same barbarous weapons.

The lurid tableaux of popular sovereignty in Kansas were watched from Washington with nervous suspense. Agents on each side of the political conflict hovered about the lobbies of the capitol: Lane, on behalf of the convention over which he had presided, with a memorial asking the immediate admission of Kansas to the Union under the Topeka Constitution; Stringfellow,† for the Missouri

May-June. party, to urge men of the South to be up and doing, lest the game be lost. In the House though half the divided force of its Native-Americans engaged in demoralizing for the Union's sake, strong sympathy developed for "bleeding Kansas," whose free consent the administration with iron heel seemed bent upon crushing. Upon suggestion of the contest already pending between Whitfield and Reeder for a seat as delegate, this branch sent an investigating committee into the territory to report. William A. Howard, of Michigan, John Sherman, of Ohio, and Mordecai Oliver, of Missouri, composed this committee,—the second of the three, and the most indefatigable, a tall, pale stripling of a legislator, new to

* See, more fully, Spring's *Kansas*, cs. 6, 7.

† Stephens writes, referring to the latter's sojourn in the city: "Stringfellow is our main man in Kansas, you know." Johnston's *A. H. Stephens*, 309.

fame but not soon to be forgotten. The first meeting of the committee was held at Kansas City on the 14th of April; and, after examining three hundred and twenty-three witnesses, representing every shade of political opinion, whose huge mass of testimony was printed and circulated in a bulky volume by order of the House, the majority of the investigators, Howard and Sherman, made an elaborate report late in the session which summed up the testimony as favorable to the July. oppressed settlers from the free States, who had been overborne by fraudulent elections and a fraudulent legislature, and whose anti-slavery constitution not only embodied the will of a genuine majority of the actual settlers, but had been framed and adopted by as regular means as the chaotic condition of affairs permitted.*

In fine, the shortest way out of the woods, in the opinion of most Anti-Nebraska members, was to admit Kansas at once as a State, with its Topeka or free-soil constitution, following the precedent of California. A bill reported to that effect in the House, after having been rejected June 30th by a majority of one, and then reconsidered, passed on the 3d of July by a majority of two, stimulated by the reading of the Kansas investigating July. committee's report, and by a further disposition to draw an issue with the Senate. For in this latter body, ruled by the administration Democracy, Douglas had reported a bill on that same 30th of June, which, forsaking his favorite ground of non-intervention, proposed that the President should appoint five commissioners to take a census of the inhabitants in Kansas, hold an election under their own arbitrary supervision, and set things in order for a new territorial convention and a new constitution of the people. This bill embodied proposals of harmony which Toombs had offered on behalf of the South; but Anti-Nebraska men utterly distrusted the sincerity of the experiment, and placed no faith in the justice of the President, to whom the whole machinery was thus confided. The Senate

* Congressional Globe; Report of Kansas Investigating Committee.

passed this bill at early dawn of July 3d, after an all-night session.* The response of the House, a few hours later, was the passage of that other bill of which we have spoken, admitting Kansas under the Topeka constitution; and that bill, on the 8th, the Senate rejected.

The session closed with the two Houses deadlocked on the question of Kansas, and bristling in angry opposition.

^{July,} In the popular branch neither Whitfield nor ^{August.} Reeder was allowed to sit as territorial delegate. To the army appropriation bill was fastened a provision that no regular troops should be employed to enforce the laws passed by the territorial legislature, until Congress should determine whether or not it was a valid assembly; and that the President, moreover, should use the military power in Kansas to protect the persons and property of genuine settlers against all armed violence from non-residents. The House passed also a bill of its own for reorganizing the distracted territory by the choice of a new local legislature, by the dismissal of all criminal prosecutions now pending for so-called treason, by the submission of all territorial laws to the approval of Congress, and finally by restoring the subverted compact of the Missouri compromise. Such a bill, of course, had no chance in the Senate. Finally, the Representatives framed other appropriation acts, so that not a dollar should be expended for the political prosecutions which Lecompte, the Chief Justice, had directed, nor to defray the cost of the false legislature of Shawnee Mission. By meagre majorities the House receded at the last moment from these latter amendments; but to the army bill proviso it stubbornly adhered. Congress adjourned at early daylight on the 18th of August after a final fifteen hours' session, marked with unusual sobriety.†

The army appropriation bill had failed, and the President, in consequence, proclaimed a new session ^{August 21-30.} immediately to meet on the 21st. The special

* The final vote stood 33 to 12. Congressional Globe.

† Congressional Globe.

session convened accordingly ; and for several days the House seemed disposed to adhere to its proviso concerning the use of regular troops, while the Senate, by a decided majority, and backed by the administration, refused to admit it. On August 30th the House committee of ways and means reported once more the army appropriation bill in its objectionable shape, and the House passed it; the Senate sent it back with an amendment which struck out the proviso ; and the House at last concurring by a very narrow margin,* the army bill became a law, and Congress adjourned the same day. It was National Americans in the House who flinched at the last moment ; of the Anti-Nebraska members, now styled Republicans, every man stood fast. The two sessions were memorable ; and, if not accomplishing much positive good, this House of new, negative, and commonplace men had stood firm against formidable evil, and developed great latent energy. Northern sentiment had relied much on brains and the conciliating bent in national polities ; but backbone, now, might count for something.

For months before the adjournment three political parties presented three distinctive candidates for next President to the choice of the people. There was the proud war-horse of the Democracy, fast bestridden now by slavery ; the Native-American steed, on the last legs of sectional accommodation ; and that new full-blooded racer, claiming to be sired by Jefferson himself, which bore the traditional name "Republican."

This last grand organization of our politics seized upon the choicest derelict of wrecked and abandoned parties to give sanction and confidence to a splendid moral reform which only the headlong degeneracy of the age could ban as geographical. Its motive force might be insensibly expansive, dangerous to the permanency of systems falsely regarded as essential to the permanence of the Union ; but rude aggression wakened that force into activity, while the

* By 101 to 98.

noble procreation of new States absorbed for the present its whole vitality and attention. "Free soil, free speech, free labor, and free men," watchwords in 1848, were heard once more; or, more immediately, free Kansas, and the reconsecration of free national territory. Ever since those splendid gains in Michigan and Ohio on the Anti-Nebraska issues, the Northern sentiment had been growing irresistibly in favor of a new national party founded upon the great proviso of Jefferson, and bearing the name he most cherished. At Pittsburg, this year, on the 22d February 22. of February, delegates met to lay the keel of a national Republican party, such as had originated in the West,* radicals and men of conservative type combining. The veteran Giddings was there, Owen Lovejoy, the brother of the Alton martyr, Julian, of Indiana, Chandler, of Michigan, and John A. King, of New York, son of Rufus, the illustrious Federalist, whose speech, lately exhumed, on the Missouri compromise, was a storehouse of historical argument in favor of Congressional regulation in the territories. The lion among these delegates was Francis P. Blair, Jackson's famous editor and a Southern man, who hoped, like others from the border State, when this movement was first organized, that the Missouri line would be eventually restored. Blair was chosen to preside, and the convention put forth a long and ably written exposition of the principles and purposes of this "Republican" party.† A convention of this party to nominate candidates for President and Vice-President was summoned to meet in Philadelphia on the 17th of June. At the Federal capital, in the meantime, Anti-Nebraska members of both Houses conferred together for better harmony; and, in a

notable caucus held on the 11th of March, at which March. all the free States but California were represented, the inclination strongly shown was to conduct a Presidential canvass the present year upon the single issue of slavery non-extension.

* *Supra*, p. 303.

† This exposition was prepared by Henry J. Raymond, of New York.

The national convention of the Republican party assembled at Philadelphia pursuant to the call of the Pittsburg meeting, whose invitation was freely extended to all who thought alike upon the new crisis of affairs, "without regard to past political differences or divisions." Old Whigs, Wilmot-Proviso Democrats, and Free Soilers came together, but the slave States in general held haughtily back. Henry S. Lane, of Indiana, was chosen chairman; and, in a platform full of felicitous phrases, the convention, strongly affirming its allegiance to the Constitution, the Union, and the rights of States, laid down that Congress had sovereign power over the national territories, and ought to exercise that power not to assist slavery, but to prohibit it. This doctrine, which proposed restoring the action of the Federal government "to the principles of Washington and Jefferson," was happily illustrated by coupling together as subjects for Congressional intervention, "those twin relics of barbarism, — polygamy and slavery." The Ostend circular was condemned with its "highwayman's plea that might makes right," and the immediate admission of Kansas into the Union with her free Constitution was proclaimed the most effectual way of restoring the violated rights of her citizens and ending all local strife. An informal ballot being had for candidates, John C. Fremont, of California, the path-finder, led strongly for President, and nearly all the votes being cast in his favor on a first formal ballot, his nomination was made unanimous.* For Vice-President, a conservative citizen, William L. Dayton, of New Jersey, was nominated in the same harmonious spirit.

While the various elements opposed to slavery expansion were thus smoothly and skilfully kneaded into the new Republican party, — its principles and platform tending to that fostering expenditure for public objects which Clay had always inculcated, but of which Jacksonian Democrats disapproved, and its inspiration coming from strong gov-

* The informal ballot gave Fremont 359, and McLean 196. Upon the formal ballot, Fremont received all but 38 votes.

ernors, like Chase, and that talented and versatile minority of Senators among whom Seward stood foremost, with able journalists and astute managers besides, such as Greeley, Raymond, Blair, and Thurlow Weed, — the Native-Americans, without eminent direction, essayed their strength in marshalling the elements of timid Unionism, whose bleat was for peace. While Democrats were set upon pleasing the South, and Republicans upon pleasing the North, our “dark-lantern magnates” held to the paralyzing policy of pleasing both sections. At a national council of the American order held in the fall of 1855, at Philadelphia, the majority took literally “know-nothing” ground upon the repeal of the Missouri compromise, whereupon the delegates from New England and Northwestern States

^{February.} seceded in disgust. On the same 22d of February of that other memorable gathering at Pittsburg, the Native-Americans made their Presidential nomination at Philadelphia, seeking whatever prestige might accrue from being earliest in the field. The grand council, the day before, had modified somewhat its former ignoramus attitude on the slavery issues of the day; yet its posture was spiritless still, and it harped upon its favorite platitude, that “Americans must rule America.” Without further platform or announcement of principles, the nominating convention the next day put forward Millard Fillmore for President. Andrew J. Donnelson, of Tennessee, was its candidate for Vice-President.

The National Democracy, the party of the administration, met at Cincinnati on the 2d of June. John ^{June 2-6.} E. Ward, of Georgia, was chairman. Its platform, carefully planked together, condemned all political discrimination of religion or accidental birthplace; upheld the Kansas-Nebraska act, and the broad principle of territorial option as between freedom and slavery, which that act embodied; pledged a faithful execution of the fugitive-slave act; discountenanced all agitation of the slavery question; recognized State rights in the sense of the Kentucky and Virginia resolutions; promised ascendancy in the Gulf of Mexico; sympathized with the “regene-

rating efforts" which were being made in Central America; and proclaimed "unqualified admiration" of the administration of Franklin Pierce. But these last words of praise were only preparatory to shelving a President, whose "young Rapid" career, as slaveholders themselves perceived, had dissipated his popularity too greatly to make him available for re-election. The very first ballot for President — with a compromise effected between the New York "Hards" and "Softs" which neutralized their strength — gave James Buchanan the lead, whose vote was 135, against 122 for Pierce, 33 for Douglas, and 6 for Cass. Several ballots followed under the two-thirds rule, until finally Pierce's name was withdrawn after a fifteenth ballot, and that of Douglas after a sixteenth; and, upon the seventeenth, Buchanan's choice was unanimous. John A. Quitman was put forward for Vice-President, and led in fact on the first trial; but the man who filibustered, and was trying to get our neutrality laws repealed, seemed a risky candidate; and, upon the second ballot, John C. Breckinridge, also of the House, and a fluent and popular debater, took the honor.

In making tools of Northern statesmen, earnest slave-holders had never shown a disposition to sacrifice ^{August-}their ends one iota to the promptings of personal ^{November.} friendship. Pierce found this now to his anguish, deprived by the course he had chosen of that sympathy and respect in his own State and neighborhood which should be one's sweetest solace when retirement comes; and Douglas, too, had a lesson even more bitter to learn in the course of the next four years. Buchanan had resigned already from the court of London and its barren honors, to be succeeded by another Pennsylvanian, George M. Dallas; and, returning to America in the April before his party convention, he found that long absence and irresponsibility for events were qualifications for a present candidacy greater far than the most toilsome service. The reputation, too, for great sobriety, wisdom, and sagacity, and his weight of public experience, disposed many

to turn favorably towards him who were not of his party, and gave him extensive strength. While the slave power, moreover, flung Pierce aside after squeezing dry the pulp of his popularity, it judged favorably of "Old Buck," the Northern partner in the "Ostend manifesto," as an instrument to use next; nor, as the sequel will show, did it judge wholly amiss.

Fremont, the Republican antagonist, brought rash youth once more into comparison, but his selection was carefully made; and, though the gallant pathfinder might not have been a judicious leader to gather the first fruits of a national victory, his brilliant and dashing energy well qualified him to rally the anti-slavery hosts, where the hope was not so much to win as to gain confidence. Not the least of Fremont's qualifications in this latter respect was his romantic espousal of Benton's gifted daughter, by which the new party seemed to ally itself to a second of those border-State families, like the Blairs, Jacksonian by recollection, whose influence at the time was well worth courting, and which even flattered the false hope that Republicanism was capable of being planted upon slave soil, thus ceasing at once to be geographical in the persuasive spread of moral ideas. As for Fillmore, the American candidate, his selection had been virtually made and accepted nearly a year previous, and before he took a tour abroad, from which he returned this summer in time to participate in the canvass. Fillmore and Americanism rallied the decimated bands of conservatives and old-fashioned lovers of parchment, for whom moral compromise and the ligaments of systems irreconcilable had still a magic. "Sectional," "geographical," were epithets now applied to the Republican organization, even more repelling than "Freedom shriekers," "Nigger worshippers," or that favorite Southern sobriquet of "Black Republicans." Many old-time Whigs in the free States, lately influential, like Everett, Winthrop, and Washington Hunt, thought, as the latter once expressed himself, that while wishing to prevent wrong on the slavery question, they could not make it the sole object of their thoughts to the exclusion

of "more practical concerns;" * and the small fry of rotten coalitionists and squint-brained reformers that wriggled in the net of the new party among fish of better size, repelled them. Hence they preferred to ride in the lumbering old stage coach, where the company was sure to be select, with Crittenden and many other honorable slaveholders to keep up national affiliations, even though the carriage should come in last. Fillmore himself, however, thought he had at least an even chance of winning, and was much exalted by the Know-Nothing success in New York the previous year. In a campaign speech he now advanced the new and astounding doctrine, that if a political party should succeed which selected, as these Republicans had done for the first time in our annals, candidates for both Presidency and Vice-Presidency from the free States alone to rule over the whole Union, such a humiliation to the South ought to justify that section in withdrawing allegiance.†

True was it, in a physical sense, that the present Republican party began by being geographical. But this was from the force of accidental circumstances, and because the South had departed from the faith of the fathers, and refused either to have emancipation discussed or to confine the slave system to the fifteen States in which it now existed. In the truly enlightened sense it was slavery that was sectional and geographical, while freedom was national and universal. And yet, in the prevailing opinion of the voting mass, North as well as South, Republicanism this year was doomed to defeat; such was the reverence felt for Union, as influenced by long precedent and the equilibrium of systems. At the same time, earnestness prevailed over insipid allegiance on either side of the border. The August State elections showed in Missouri, North Carolina, Arkansas, Kentucky, and Texas a decided and generally an increased Democratic prepon-

* 2 T. Weed's Memoirs, c. 18.

† Newspapers of the day; 2 T. Weed's Memoirs, c. 18; 2 Coleman's Crittenden, 133; 2 Curtis's Buchanan.

derance over the American fraternizers. And Northern States, such as Iowa, Vermont, and Maine, pronounced themselves Republican,—Hannibal Hamlin, a Senator who had lately renounced the Democratic faith, being chosen governor in the last-named State. The October State elections, however, turned the scales of a close national contest; for while in Ohio the Republicans strongly prevailed, Pennsylvania and Indiana went Democratic, and a fusion of Republicans and Americans in the Keystone State was effected in vain. November came, with the last of State elections, the vote for national candidates, and the chilling frost together. New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Indiana, and Illinois were all in the Democratic column. But the rest of the free States pushed gallantly forward for Fremont; while New York chose, besides, a governor upon the new platform of the Jeffersonian ordinance, in John A. King, a triumph all the more glorious inasmuch as "Hards" and "Softs" had coalesced upon their candidates, and drawn forth from the senile ex-President Van Buren a letter which seemed to discredit his own Free-Soil course of 1848.

"We have lost a battle," was the comment of a Republican organ * on the day after election; "the Bunker Hill of the new struggle for freedom is past; the Saratoga and Yorktown are yet to be achieved." And surely, when these electoral results were fully reckoned, they might well have carried dismay to the citadel of pro-slavery strength. Never had so great a work been done by a political party within the first year of its birth, against deep and inveterate prejudices which were too irrational not to diminish, should provocation to free sentiment continue. "Black Republicanism" carried New England; swept the great State of New York, burying a once-honored son, Millard Fillmore, in lasting discomfiture; and, despite some disappointments encountered elsewhere, took vigorous and emphatic possession of the broad Northwest. Pennsylvania had borne up her favorite son,

* The New York Tribune.

Buchanan, by an electoral majority of scarcely more than 1,000, in a total vote of over 460,000; Indiana's margin, too, was very close; and the transfer of these two States — or of Pennsylvania alone, with New Jersey or Illinois added to the Republican column — would have reversed the national result, against the united phalanx of the solid South. For the Native-Americans, with their proscriptive tenets, the defeat was overwhelming. Fillmore and Donnelson carried but a single State, — Maryland; and the minorities footed up by their party in every other Southern State promised but a feeble resistance of loyalty to the bolder programme favored in that section, of "rule or ruin." Natives against foreigners, Protestants against Roman Catholics, no union of Church and State, more stringent naturalization laws, all this was but as dust in the balance in these days; and as for the slavery problem in its present national development, neither foes nor promoters could ever compromise again.*

The American people were not, then, quite ready to plunge into sectional controversy; nor, to be frank, did they quite believe all that orators depicted in the late canvass, of "bleeding Kansas" or "bleeding Sumner." Northern Know-Nothings, indeed, and the secret Hindoo council, passed the victim by like the priest and Levite of the parable, — too honorable to hurt, and too scrupulous of national citizenship to help. It was not strange if, in the dead level of lawlessness which the wrongs of our distant territorial rule fostered, the want of picturqueness detracted from the effect. Following the arrest of Robinson and the flight of the other free-State leaders, squatter sovereignty in Kansas lapsed for many months into chaos and civil disorder, while these May-August green and fertile plains were ravaged at large by armed robbers and ruffians. Lecompte's judicial machinery, whose process had been perverted to hounding down territorial treason, and marching ragamuffin rioters

* See Electoral Tables in Appendix.

with shot-guns and powder-flasks as a *posse comitatus*, could scarcely bring a cattle thief to honest trial. Free settlers were murdered; friends of the murderer were murdered in retaliation. Plundering parties spread over Kansas to harass and expel the peaceful.

Into the cold narrative of these atrocities—which, unfortunately, were not all committed on one side—we refrain from entering.* One of the pacifying proposals brought forward in Congress by Crittenden, the last of slavery's pacifiers, had been to despatch Winfield Scott to the scene, in all the plenitude of his military greatness. But Scott was no favorite of this administration, being almost at swords' points with the Secretary of War. An excellent officer of high rank was sent, however, in Gen. Persifer F. Smith, who took command presently of the regular troops in this military department, but was chary about using them, heeding the temper the House had lately shown on the army appropriation bill. All through the summer, emigrants from the free States had been on the move for Kansas, resolute in the cause, and arriving by the hundreds. Atchison and the border-Missourians tried in alarm to interdict their passage. The banks of the Missouri river were guarded by pro-slavery pickets, steamboats were stopped and searched, arms were confiscated, and individuals suspected to be from the North were turned back. But Kansas could be reached by more routes than one, and the intercepted colonists soon began taking up a new route through Iowa and Nebraska; more than three hundred of them, with women and children, being circuitously led to their destination by the irrepressible Lane, early in August. Topeka became thus repopulated, and new free towns began to spring up on the way, Lawrence and Lecompton becoming the rallying-points of intestine turbulence. Governor Shannon, whose views concerning territorial traitors and treason had undergone considerable change, after being brought face to face with the opposing

* The whole story of the Kansas civil war is faithfully and graphically recounted in Spring's *Kansas*, cs. 7-9.

parties, made, in August, a treaty at Lawrence for the mutual suspension of hostilities ; and thereupon laid down his office, glad to get with a whole skin out of the territory which he found was as hard to govern in these times (to use his own colloquial expression) as "the devil in hell."*

John W. Geary, of Pennsylvania, appointed as Shannon's successor, assumed the governorship at Lecompton on the 11th of September, stalking into the ring with superb self-confidence, physical giant that he was. He began by disbanding the pro-slavery militia, under Atchison's command, which had been put into teasing activity after Shannon's departure, and by ordering all irregular bodies to lay down their arms and quit the territory. He then enrolled a local militia under his own official direction, and set to relieving the territorial courts of their long paralysis. For a time Geary brought affairs to comparative order. In consequence of orders from Washington, Robinson and the other treason prisoners had been released on bail upon his arrival. Prosecutions for criminal offences followed, and free-State prisoners truly felt that the law was partial in their disfavor. This fact, which was true enough, brought the courts and the new governor into collision. The Chief Justice and marshal shielded a pro-slavery murderer whom the governor had apprehended with great difficulty. The marshal was forced to resign, and on Geary's representation Lecompte was removed by the President from the Chief Justiceship about the middle of December. There seemed at last a really bright and hopeful state of things, which Geary and General Smith both believed would last. All through these exciting disorders, Kansas had been the recipient of charity ; and many thousand dollars were sent, mainly in small sums, for the relief of those who in the face of bitter obstacles were trying to mould this territory into a free State.†

Congress met on the first day of December in final ses-

* Spring's Kansas, cs. 7-9.

† Ib.

sion, brimming with excitement over the election returns.

Those returns brought to the retiring President December. neither penitence nor equanimity. Addressing legislature and people upon the last appropriate occasion, his official message sounded a superfluous alarm against the evil of sectional and geographical parties; and recreant to historical truth and the reluctant opinion of his native New England, he charged the North with exasperating aggressions upon the South under pretence of seeking only to prevent the extension of slavery beyond existing limits. He denied that the annulment of the Missouri compromise involved any breach of good faith, or was meant to extend the area of slave labor. The Kansas disorders, he said, had been grossly exaggerated for political effect; and the cry from the North against reputed Southern encroachments sprang in reality from their own spirit of revolutionary assault upon the South's domestic institutions.*

This angry and incendiary tirade evoked some spirited criticism in Congress on the anti-administration side. In the Senate, Trumbull, Hale, and Wilson, as soon as the message had been read, denied with emphasis that the Republicans were unfaithful to the Constitution, as alleged, or meant to interfere with slavery in the States where it already existed. But slaveholders were incredulous. "Those voting for Fremont," said Brown, of Mississippi, "meant to abolish slavery everywhere." "And if Fremont had succeeded," added James M. Mason, of Virginia, with an ominous gesture, "the Union would have been immediately dissolved."†

Pierce's one-sided arraignment of the spirit of sectional 1856, encroachment tallied little with official utterances November- in South Carolina. "I fear that the triumph will 1857, January. be a barren one," said Governor Adams, of this State, in a message commenting upon Buchanan's election, "and the South will act wisely to employ the interval

* President's message, Dec. 2, 1856.

† Congressional Globe; newspapers.

of repose thus secured in earnest preparation for the inevitable conflict." And pressing zealously the importance of keeping the Southern monopoly of the cotton plant against the strenuous exertions which Europe was making to extend its cultivation in the East Indies, Egypt, Algeria, and Brazil, — an object to be attained only by keeping up cheap labor, — he argued in favor of reopening the African slave trade. And Allston, the new governor of South Carolina, soon after, in his inaugural address, admitted clearly that the point at issue with the North was not to keep slavery where it already existed, but to carry it rightfully into new States, so as to give the Southern section "of the Confederacy" increased political strength. Nor were signs wanting of Southern preparation to dissolve the Union. A convention which assembled at Savannah on the 8th of December, with the object of "encouraging Southern industry and trade," advised the establishment of Southern foundries for casting cannon and small arms, and that the South should see that its armories were replenished, and its forts and harbors put by Congress into a proper state of defence. The Governor of Mississippi recommended a convention of Southern States to concert plans of action, and set forth a list of contingencies which would justify the South in sundering the ties of the Union.*

This was a winter to be long remembered for its icy severity, following upon a season of rude autumnal gales. Railroad travel was seriously blocked by snow as far south as Virginia, while an arctic temperature prevailed at the North and East and on the Western prairies. Among the lesser incidents of the season was the failure of Wisconsin's electors, by reason of a storm, to meet for casting their vote on the day assigned by law. When the ice broke up in February, flood and freshet occasioned great loss.

Kansas came up promptly, once more, before the House.

* Newspapers of the day.

The contested seat of delegate from the territory was refused to Whitfield on the first day, but given him a few days after upon reconsideration. A new effort was made to abrogate the code of the Shawnee Mission legislature, with its arbitrary and barbarous provisions ; and the House committee on territories reported a bill to that effect, which ordered furthermore a new election. By a strong Northern vote the bill passed the House on the 17th of February,* — not one Southern member supporting it, — and the Senate on the 19th laid it on the table. With hopefulness on either side, the disposition developed to pass Kansas over to the mercies of the next administration. It was no good portent, however, that every effort to bastardize the hideous code was baffled or put down ; though President Pierce himself had been forced to express the hope that, by some means or another, such parts of it as violated the organic act of Congress would be blotted out. Governor Geary, in the meantime, as we have seen, had induced the President to remove the unsavory Lecompte from his post as Chief Justice ; yet pro-slavery influence prevented Pierce's nominee as successor from being confirmed, so that the final adjournment of Congress left Lecompte as before. On the 6th of January, 1857, the free-State legislature met at Topeka under the Constitution now denounced as revolutionary. Neither governor nor lieutenant-governor was present ; and, under the direction of Judge Cato, a fit associate of Lecompte, the marshal and his posse arrested members enough to deprive that body of a quorum. Soon after this, the territorial and pro-slavery legislature met at Lecompton, and showed its teeth at Governor Geary, who could not be fair without becoming obnoxious to it. Not only did this legislature refuse to repeal the foul acts of its fraudulent predecessor, but it upheld Lecompte in his quarrel with the governor, and passed various objectionable acts over the latter's veto.† The most important of this legislation was an act calling a convention to frame a State Constitution at Lecompton

* The vote stood 98 to 79.

† Spring's Kansas, c. 9.

in the following September. A census, notoriously partial, was to be made up in the meantime; and another act provided for electing a new territorial legislature in October. Geary, finding himself abandoned and his life in danger, left the territory secretly and sped to Washington to test his chances with the incoming administration.

There was hope felt, after all, among Republicans, that Kansas would work out her salvation, and enter the Union a free State. True, the anti-slavery and pro-slavery settlers still refused to mingle or vote together; but if the Topeka legislature was revolutionary, that at Lecompton sprang from fraud and violence; neither, in any just sense, legitimately represented the whole people, and a fair administration should not take sides. Yet, aside from Kansas, there were signs in the sky that the old equipoise between freedom and slavery was forever broken. Minnesota and Oregon, territories each with a thriving Northern population, were in ripe condition for Statehood, and slavery had no daughters to match them. The census roll of Minnesota was a credential indisputable; and so, not without some smothered reluctance, Congress passed the usual act which authorized the first steps to be taken preliminary to admission.* In all the virgin soil which compromise still portioned out to slavery, not one energetic new colony had been planted, nor had effort been made to subdivide Texas.

Little else transpired to mark the annals of this Congress. The most important legislation of a session given largely to rambling debate was the act which recast to some extent the Polk tariff of 1846,† for the sake of diminishing the revenue. Under Campbell's inspiration, an opposition House passed a bill framed in the interest of manufacturers; the Democratic Senate substituted a bill of its own which made a horizontal reduction of existing duties. By one of those eleventh-hour bargains which no honest government likes to multiply, each side to the controversy gained something. Rates on fabrics of iron,

* Act Feb. 26, 1857.

† Vol. iv. p. 515.

cotton, and woollen were fixed at a moderate standard; wool of the cheapest sort was admitted duty free, and the former free list was considerably extended in favor of raw materials. Our customs revenue was growing too great for peace times, and this was the occasion of the act.*

Northern manufacturers lobbied considerably in the interest of a new tariff; and with lobby influences hard at work for their interests, for land grants to aid the construction of frontier railways, North and South, and for ocean mail subsidies, an atmosphere of jobbery and corruption was engendered. So determined was the pressure for river improvements in both Houses of this Congress, that the President's strict scruples were brushed aside, and five appropriations of the kind passed at the first session over his veto. The House, to vindicate its integrity, appointed this winter a committee of investigation. Three of its members, who were shown guilty of corrupt practices, resigned their seats before action was taken on their expulsion. Some reporters were expelled for dishonest conduct; and one important witness refusing to answer the questions which the committee put to him, a bill was passed to compel attendance and testimony in such cases by fine and imprisonment.†

The final aspect of our foreign relations under President Pierce was neither creditable nor discreditable. That dramatic recognition of Walker's buccaneering government at Nicaragua, which had cost our cabinet so much nervous consultation, did not keep usurpation on its tottering supports. In vain had Walker issued a decree to legalize slavery anew in Central America, and displayed for sale a list of confiscated estates; in vain had Soulè visited him, probably to inspire these decrees and pave the way for a colony of American slave-holders. Father Vijil's mission did nothing for the filibustering cause, and the uneasy envoy soon returned

* Act March 3, 1857.

† Act Jan. 24, 1857.

home. Meanwhile, though supplied with men enlisted in shameful breach of our neutrality laws, Walker lost strength rapidly. Rivas, the native chief, absconding, the usurper caused himself to be chosen President of Nicaragua; but our government refused to receive his new ministers, or to recognize him by this rank. The latest news of this winter showed Walker's forces hemmed in between Lake Nicaragua and the Pacific Ocean by an allied force of hostile natives and Costa Ricans, who had cut off all aid from the Atlantic side. Half-starved and reduced by battle, cholera, and scattering desertion, the expulsion of Walker's band was soon to follow.

Nor had the adjustment of Central American settlements fared favorably with England. Buchanan, while at London, had been unable to straighten out the Clayton-Bulwer difficulty. Dallas, who succeeded him, arranged a treaty with Great Britain for bringing all controversy to a close; the Senate discussed it through the winter, but did not ratify. John Forsyth the younger, Pierce's minister to Mexico, arranged with that republic, now driven to desperate straits, a compact which promised on its face reciprocity; but its main idea being a money loan upon a mortgage which sooner or later the United States must foreclose, that scheme came also to grief, for our people were repugnant to annexation. In fine, the foreign glories of this administration were confined chiefly to the diplomatic salaries bill, to Marcy's arrangement of fishing rights and reciprocity with the British provinces, and to the settlement of some international principles with Europe suitable to a state of war.

When the treaty of peace was signed abroad, which closed the Russian war, the conference of European powers at Paris proposed four important rules: the abolition of privateering; the exemption from seizure of an enemy's goods, excepting contraband of war, under a neutral flag; a like exemption of neutral goods, excepting contraband of war, under an enemy's flag; and that a blockade, in order to be valid, must be effective. The United States was invited to join in establishing such

a code, but Marcy, as before, objected to the article which abolished privateering. The other principles, of course, we as neutrals had long contended for. The refusal of the United States may have been on proper reason; but, like most other matters of policy under this administration, the choice enured practically to the South in the event of disunion, and in the end refusal cost our loyal people heavily.*

Throughout the three sessions of this struggling Congress, the courtesies of a deliberative body had been remarkably well preserved, except for the dastardly assault upon Sumner, which was committed while the Senate was not in actual session.† No brutal scene of violence dis-

1857. graced the floor of either House, though sectional controversy raged angrily. Before a final adjournment, Aiken, of South Carolina, in the Representatives' hall, proposed a vote of thanks to Banks, the retiring Speaker, and the vote passed by a large majority. These retiring courtesies were aided perhaps by a feeling that the pendulum in the late elections had swung back to the side of the Democracy.

For all this, however, towards the retiring administration the Republicans had no disposition to reciprocate. Franklin Pierce was a mournful disappointment to all who had hoped for a golden era of peace and harmony, and to the New England that bore and reared him. Popular, and overwhelmingly so, when swept into the Presidency by a great concourse of fraternizing elements,—falsely im-

* Marcy's refusal was based upon the supposed need of privateering as an American weapon in case of a future war with Great Britain. This code of Paris bound only the nations to one another which assented to it, and it could be assented to only as a collective whole. In the Southern rebellion of 1861, President Lincoln offered to accede to this code, but permission was refused. By that time England and France viewed the question of privateering in a different light.

† The death of Preston L. Brooks, the assailant of the Massachusetts Senator, occurred suddenly in the course of this latest session, and his funeral ceremonies at the capitol were attended by the President in person, together with his cabinet, and by the President-elect besides.

agined strong and trustworthy because his private life was pure, — he disgusted and lost strength in the free States so rapidly, year by year of his administration, that those who had bent him to their wishes dared not risk a second national canvass under him. In New York State alone, where more than a quarter-million of voters supported him when he took the oath of office, his constituency was reduced in a single year to 190,000, and in 1855 to less than 150,000. And the cause of all this — the policy he pursued — was to his lasting reproach. Beginning as a conciliator of sections, as one who promised to discourage all agitation, he stirred sectional strife as no President had ever done before, to prove himself the abject devotee of the slaveholders. The North had not furnished a President before so entirely recreant, so barren in other ideas. An amiable man, not without the misgivings natural to his bringing-up, Pierce showed himself, particularly in foreign policy, less puissant than pusillanimous. He applauded vagabond invaders, and left them to fail ; he beat at the closed door of annexation, and then retreated at the sound he made. Our only naval exploit under him was to bombard a little Central American town of half-breeds, and our army accomplished nothing nobler than to disperse the freemen's legislature of Kansas territory. To delight the South he posed as the strict constructionist, and went beyond the majority of his own party in vetoing bills for improving Northern rivers and harbors, at the same time that he built costly forts for the South, and asked extravagant military appropriations tending to the increase of irresponsible power. Wide tracts were opened under him for the desolating march of slavery, and for dog's-eared codes by which dunces tried to blot out civilization as a crime. With a mean, bigoted policy within and without, this administration had not even that miserly merit of frugality which bigots may sometimes vaunt ; for though the revenue flowed in freely enough to maintain a surplus, the ordinary public expenditures under no administration had ever been so costly. We shall not deny to him a personal integrity ; for Pierce was neither base nor

venal, and no personal scandals attached to him. He wavered as one of good feeling might do, who had attached himself to a bad cause. But the only real product of all Pierce's fair intentions was that deadly nightshade, the Kansas-Nebraska act. Its repeal of plighted faith the President surely did not originate, but he set it afloat with his indorsement, made the bill a law, and turned the option conferred upon popular sovereignty, so far as he dared, to give slavery the advantage. Instead of reconciling, he took sides. Facile, docile, not without amiable qualities, faithful to his taskmasters, and of generous impulses which kept him true to his chosen course, Pierce sought a renomination from the set he so constantly served, and they gave him instead the passport to their home society. Remote, melancholy, shrouded in domestic sorrow, so tenderly was this genial and chivalric ex-President regarded by Southern gentlemen upon his retirement, that the rumor was widely credited that he had received the present of a plantation, and meant to settle down among them for the rest of his life. But, after much foreign travel, he returned finally to his town in the Granite State and built himself a fine house; a handsome recluse in the prime of life, among neighbors whose affinities had changed, and pointed out with the finger of curiosity as the man who had once been President. As a final misfortune it proved impossible to allay Pierce's obloquy, for the administration which followed carried his obsequious policy to a worse fruition.

The cabinet of this administration was a mosaic work, made up to please all factions of the Democratic party; but Jefferson Davis, who has commented upon its continuance without a single change, attributes that felicitous harmony to the remarkable power exerted by the chief, who was generous, frank, and, in Southern estimation at least, true to his friends and his faith.* No private correspondence of this administration has seen the light; yet there can be little doubt that contemporary opinion was

* Jefferson Davis's Confederacy, 25.

correct in ascribing the management to an exclusive clique composed of Davis, Cushing, and President Pierce himself, who unified the efforts to win a second term. Others, no doubt, pulled the small wires of local activity ; but all that was planned and executed in domestic policy was planned and executed probably by this inner clique. Nor did Jefferson Davis confine himself, as we strongly suspect, to the expansion of our united Confederacy, without keeping in view the contingency that his section might secede, carrying off all congenial accretions of soil with it. Never did a war secretary in times of profound peace give such energy to the mobilizing of our military force, which, with West-Point prepossessions, he thought should pass volunteers by and develop as a great regular army. He searched out and introduced the latest improvements in the art of war, sending a commission to the Crimea, and busying himself over rifled muskets, minie-balls, and the casting of cannon by the newest process. Aided by Cooper, the adjutant-general, whose talents went later to rebellion's cause, he promulgated a light-infantry system of tactics, revised army regulations, and modified the list in the whole roster. Davis has claimed that in this zest of official action he was not impelled by sectional considerations ; and yet there are pages of his memoirs which indicate that, like other slaveholders of his advanced type, he had a keen eye to disunion possibilities, even while he hoped, during these four years, to Southernize the Union instead.* Southern forts and Southern arsenals were not neglected under his careful supervision.† And whether it was from reckless temper or some deeper motive for affront, Davis kept up bitter relations with Winfield Scott, and opposed that new honor of promotion which, by the

* Jefferson Davis's *Confederacy*, c. 4 ; Alfriend's *Life of Davis*, c. 5.

† There was much Northern comment upon the Act of August 18, 1856, approved by President Pierce, which appropriated for the whole line of Northern Atlantic fortifications, the region of the chief commercial ports, only \$190,000, but for those of the Southern Atlantic and the Gulf, \$928,000. The final bill of March 3, 1857, made the inequality much less, but the South still kept the lion's share.

co-operation of all loyal men, fixed that lion-like Virginian unapproachably at the head of the army list.

Pierce's Secretary of War, in fine, had his own conspicuous fortune in being the only member of an ill-starred administration, distrusted and deserted, to survive in public influence. Buchanan was too wary a politician to take any one of them on board of his bark, decked as he wished it to appear, for other seas. Marcy died soon after retirement, and so did Dobbin; Cushing, after a modicum of Massachusetts politics, sought the more congenial atmosphere of Washington city as a practising lawyer. But Jefferson Davis was a true and trusted son of Mississippi; the legislature of that State had not neglected his future; and on the same day that he loosed his grip upon the White House, he re-entered the Senate for a last national career.

CHAPTER XXII.

ADMINISTRATION OF JAMES BUCHANAN.

SECTION I.

PERIOD OF THIRTY-FIFTH CONGRESS.

MARCH 4, 1857—MARCH 3, 1859.

HUMAN ambition is the constant motive force of public events, the staple of historical narration. And the world's experience shows that the meaner ambition of place for the sake of power and self dominates men's minds more than the desire to use high station for the good of the governed. In a fierce and fighting age, one wades through slaughter to reach the supreme distinction; while under the softening influences of a settled and peaceful government, whose prizes are awarded by the general suffrage, his constant temptation is to resort to corrupt, insidious, and flattering arts for gaining promotion from his fellow-citizens. Among statesmen struggling for immediate popularity, even the noblest are in danger of weakening in the high principles which their hearts tell them are right, while the coarser-grained grovel and fawn obsequiously, as though the title to superiority on their part involved no gift of discernment beyond the common level, or as panderers to the particular lust which those who can elevate them to office wish gratified.

In the American days we are describing, the fountain of national honors was in full possession of the Democratic party,—a party whose deepest principles had splendid vigor and vitality, but whose immediate policy had become dangerously perverted. That perversion was owing to the new crusade slavery was urging against the enlightenment of the age; and the slave power, the oligarchy of human capital, now ruled the Democratic party, the fountain of honors, and the citadel of national strength. The

moral opposition of the world only whetted slavery's desire to overrule that opposition; and it grew tyrannous and exacting in these days, to the verge of rebellion. It was the Prætorian band which fixed and unfixed administrations, and like its Roman prototype, made up for inferiority in numbers by compact strength, discipline, and unity of purpose. How many political leaders of these times bent to its iron dictates, and in consequence sank into their graves, mortal and corruptible, with honors as earthy as their epitaphs. Pierce, Cass, Douglas, and hundreds of others less conspicuous, are of that number; and the record of a new four years will constrain us to add Buchanan. It is something for fame to have filled high stations,—to have heaped office upon office, performed weighty functions, dispensed wide patronage; these are among the good things which are enjoyed in this life and exhausted. But where is posthumous fame, where is the gratitude of coming generations, when one's sordid ambition has been confined to making himself solid with the ruling and transitory influences which enable him to rise, and he leaves to posterity neither the inspiration of a great cause nor a great example?

James Buchanan, one of the oldest and most experienced of our public functionaries, who, unlike his predecessor, had a long store of experience to draw upon, was welcomed

1857, to the Presidency in full sincerity of heart by March many anxious and patriotic citizens, besides his party supporters. He was a man of many cordial friendships, admirable to meet on the social footing; and the people drew a breath of relief as a President whose bane had been the wish to be re-elected and serve longer gave place to this sagacious old statesman, whose years and desire to fill but one term creditably seemed already an earnest of fairness and independence of purpose.

Familiar with this national city, whither he had flitted quietly from Wheatland in course of the winter to advise upon his counsellors, Buchanan re-entered Washington early on the 3d of March, and took his bachelor comfort

over an anthracite fire in his old quarters at the National Hotel. Attended by a friend and naval surgeon, he happily escaped that poisonous disorder which, from no perceptible cause, attacked nearly all the guests of the house, at this time, and from whose dire effects many distinguished citizens from various parts of the Union never wholly recovered. The ceremonies of inauguration took place at noon of the 4th, Pierce and Buchanan riding to the capitol together in an open carriage, attended by a detachment of the Keystone political club of Pennsylvania as a body-guard, and escorted in a fine procession of the usual kind. The inaugural address, which was read by the President-elect upon the eastern portico, found enthusiastic listeners, and at its conclusion the official oath was administered by Taney, the Chief Justice.

In this address Buchanan pledged his efforts to the task of restoring harmony and the ancient friendship among the people of the several States, and preserving these "free institutions" throughout many generations to come. He announced his personal conviction that he owed his election to the inherent love which Americans felt for the Constitution and Union; he declared his intention to serve but one term, and administer affairs with the single motive of serving his fellow-citizens faithfully and living in their grateful memory; he felicitated his countrymen upon that impressive spectacle, the instant submission of the minority to the voice of the majority after a Presidential contest so impassioned and important. Would that impressive spectacle have been seen, one may ask, had the Republicans been in the majority? In this same simple principle — that the will of the majority shall govern — lay, continued Buchanan, the true settlement of the question of domestic slavery in the territories. And the whole territorial controversy being thus settled independently of Congress, no other question remains; because all agree that, under the Constitution, slavery in a State is beyond the reach of any human power, except that of the State concerned. "May we not, then, hope that the long agitation on this subject is approaching its end, and that the geo-

graphical parties to which it has given birth, so much dreaded by the father of his country, will speedily become extinct? Most happy will it be for the country when the public mind shall be diverted from this question to others of more pressing and practical importance.” *

These were soothing words, surely, and courtesy and good feeling went out from all true lovers of the Union to the man who uttered them. Now, as under each new President in turn, the great mass of the people appeared responsive; for they wearied of this moral agitation and wished to change the subject. Our sequel will show whether this non-intervention extinguisher was put over the flames so considerately; whether, in point of fact, the will of the majority was allowed its tranquil operation.

The cast of the new cabinet was not decided without painful delay and tribulation. The Senate met and adjourned on the 5th of March, without receiving a nomination of any kind. But on the 6th the list of chief advisers was sent in, and immediately confirmed. It comprised Lewis Cass, of Michigan, as Secretary of State; Howell Cobb, of Georgia, Secretary of the Treasury; John B. Floyd, of Virginia, Secretary of War; Isaac Toucey, of Connecticut, Secretary of the Navy; Jacob Thompson, of Mississippi, Secretary of the Interior; Aaron V. Brown, of Tennessee, Postmaster-General; and Jeremiah S. Black, of Pennsylvania, Attorney-General. Such a cabinet might seem at first sight fairly representative of the whole Union, in a geographical sense; but in reality it was a South-side cabinet, more literally so than that of Franklin Pierce. Not only did slaveholding Democrats outnumber those from free States by four to three, but two at least of the latter were tremulous exponents of Northern sentiment. Cass, by this time the most venerable office-holder in America, added to the easy indolence which had always been characteristic of him, the growing torpor of old age. Experienced, and not without sound talent for discussion,

* Inaugural address, March 4, 1857. 2 Curtis's Buchanan, c. 9.

he had followed all his long life rather than led, striving for many a long mile to keep up eagerly where at heart he was reluctant. Buchanan's selection of his premier was an act of personal friendship, and secured, too, for his cabinet a respectable figure-head of solid timber; and Cass's genial traits of character, besides, had gained him a wide popularity, regardless of his polities, which it was well known should be taken with a strong pinch of salt. For convenience, then, and pliable counsel, as one who would make no trouble, was the Secretary of State selected; and the President soon found as a penalty that he would have to carry most of the burden of foreign correspondence upon his own shoulders.* Toucey, again, the discarded Senator of a State now Republican, whose popular will he had opposed while he had opportunity, possessed neither the tenets nor the talents to control a New-England constituency. Black, the last of the Northern trio, brought to his post a good professional reputation, and in fact well fitted it, but he was new to the nation and to national politics.

Of Southern men in the cabinet, Floyd was a Virginian, and the son of a Virginian, and his service had been to his State. Thompson, though formerly in Congress, owed his conspicuousness to the espousal of "Southern State rights" in 1850; while Brown, a faithful and industrious Democratic leader in Tennessee, had served lately as governor of that State. Of the new cabinet and administration, Howell Cobb was by all odds the one whom expectation prefigured as the master spirit. Strong, coarse, and undaunted in his aspirations, he was intensely pro-slavery in his views, and yet had hitherto shown something of a magnanimous national spirit. A constitutional Unionist in 1850, he was one of those who had defined allegiance to the old flag as conditional upon compromises. Still in the prime of life, and combining boldness with energy, this

* See 2 Curtis's Buchanan, 399, which relates that Cass, even while in Jackson's cabinet and in the full vigor of his faculties, used to worry his chieftain greatly by bringing him matters to decide which he ought to have decided for himself.

son of Georgia kept full command of his resources, and yet it was felt that he had never quite come up to the full grade of statesman. His gifts, so far as tested, were for political leadership; and as to finance, which he now took for his special department, his competency was already doubtful. To one who has not patient industry and a firm grasp of numerical tables and economics, the arithmetic of public operations, which consists in making close and intelligent estimates and then working them out in full practice, must be a hidden science.

To turn once more to the plausible appeal of Buchanan's inaugural address, for what end was this "happy conception," whereby Congress was to practise self-abnegation and self-denial, and see what might come of the exercise of a local option between slavery and freedom? And leaving that will of a local majority to operate in the national territory, what assurance was given that rebellious dismemberment from the Union might not be the logical outcome, rather than the loyal submission of a Constitution republican in its form to the approval of Congress? Between that earliest territorial organization and settlement, moreover, and the final admission as a State with institutions beyond the reach of all external interference, was an admitted hiatus; for when, or how frequently or changeably, might these settlers, by virtue of "popular sovereignty," decide for themselves as between free and slave institutions? "This," said the new President in substance, by way of reply, "is a judicial question; the Supreme Court of the United States, before whom it is pending, will speedily settle it, and to their decision, in common with all good citizens, I shall cheerfully submit." The clause which contained this significant reference, we are told, was inserted, after Buchanan's arrival at Washington, in an address which had been carefully composed at home, copied and recopied.* Its insertion served an important purpose; and it would be very

* 2 Curtis's Buchanan, 187. •

strange if, when the new President read that passage, with the judges gathered in their robes about him, he did not know, as they did, the purport of the coming decision.* Ominous of evil was it, at all events, that on great moral and political issues, such as divided the whole people, Buchanan should have hailed the arbitrament of a court in which Democrats and slaveholders were strongly uppermost, as the end of strife. Panegyrics upon the will of the majority with such an application were like coaxing the flock into new pastures, to find the key of the paddock turned upon them.

The Dred Scott decision was pronounced on the 6th of March. The spectacle already prepared for the north basement room in the rear of the inauguration staircase was postponed over a day, and then the silken dignitaries assembled before a legal audience with opinions ready and their parts all cast. Dred Scott was a negro slave of Missouri, who about 1834 was taken by his master, a surgeon of the regular army, in the course of his own military detail, first to a military post in the State of Illinois, and afterward to Fort Snelling, on the west bank of the Mississippi, near what is now the city of St. Paul, a territorial region from which slavery had been expressly excluded under the Missouri compromise act of 1820. From this latter place, where he married, with the surgeon's consent, one of his own race and condition, Scott was brought back to Missouri in 1838, and, with wife and children, was sold and made over to another master. Alleging upon this state of facts that he and his whole family were rightfully free, the negro sued for trespass in a St. Louis court, and the case was decided in his favor. But the Supreme Court of Missouri reversed the judgment, after which the case was carried into the Fed-

March 6.

* It is not to be supposed, as Republican leaders have sometimes charged, that any secret understanding existed between the Executive and judiciary as to the actual judgment. Buchanan has spoken indignantly of the "infamous and unfounded assertion" that Chief Justice Taney told him what the decision would be. 2 Curtis's Buchanan, 207. And see Tyler's Life of Taney, c. 5.

eral circuit. Whatever motives may have set the original process running, politicians snuffed by 1854 the opportunity to use this poor hare of a client in a grand chase after constitutional principles; or, in other words, so as to elicit from the Supreme Court of the United States a decision upon the validity of the Missouri compromise and those other matters which the Kansas-Nebraska act had forced into national controversy. The defendant slave holder pleaded to the circuit jurisdiction that Dred Scott was not in any case "a citizen entitled to sue," because a negro of African descent; that plea the court overruled, and, in May, 1854, sent the case to a jury, in accordance with whose verdict judgment was rendered that the plaintiff was still properly a slave; and then the whole record went on final appeal to the tribunal in Washington. Not referees, to be sure, at their own instance, the nine silk gowns, all Democrats but one, and five of them from the States where color presumed servitude, listened patiently to the arguments of counsel favorable to one political aspect of the case or another. Argued at the winter term which preceded this last Presidential canvass, reargued at the next term following the election, this case was not decided till the churn of legislation overhead had ceased and the President-elect was inducted into office; after which, the oracle which Southern statesmen behind the scenes had been trying for many weeks to pry open was gravely unsealed.*

It was an extraordinary decision, certainly, for the third quarter of the nineteenth century, and extraordinary in more senses than one. Lucky for Buchanan, said one of his friends in comment, that the case was not decided a year earlier; for, had it been, "in my belief nothing on earth could have prevented Fremont's election."† To the majority opinion of the court five out of the nine judges

* See Johnston's A. H. Stephens, 316, etc. Stephens writes that he has been trying hard to get the Supreme Court to decide, adding that he has reason to think the justices will decide that the Missouri restriction is unconstitutional.

† George T. Curtis, in 2 Coleman's Crittenden, 137.

subscribed heartily; Nelson and Grier confined themselves more timorously to affirming simply the judgment; while only two, McLean and Curtis, spoke out for freedom. In the first place, the judgment of the circuit court was reversed and a mandate ordered to dismiss the case for want of a competent plaintiff; since no negro, bond or free, who was of slave ancestry, could maintain a standing in these United States courts as "a citizen." Next, after denying its own jurisdiction of the dispute, the court proceeded — extra-judicially, of course — to pass upon the plea to the merits and discuss the constitutional points which the politicians were interested in. In Illinois, it was held, Scott's status as a slave was controlled by a Missouri domicile; in Minnesota territory, by the principle that an act of Congress which excluded slavery north of a prescribed parallel, was necessarily unconstitutional and void. And stretching their dictum still further, the slaveholding justices in the majority resolved the Presidential doubt so meekly expressed two days before, by announcing, as from the seat of omniscience, that slaveholders could carry their slave property into any of the common territories, and that the people of a territory could not lawfully hinder the enjoyment of that right until the period should arrive for full admission into the Union as a sovereign State.*

Melancholy must have been the spectacle in this cavern of justice, through whose eastern windows glanced the sunbeams as into some mausoleum, when the Chief Justice, a man of frail and attenuated frame, read to a large audience of the bar, in a low tone of voice almost inaudible, the majority opinion prepared by himself. Elaborate, adroitly put together and cruel, it doomed the African of this age by the standard of three centuries ago, — exploring musty and worm-eaten codes, and announcing far too broadly that, at the date our Federal Constitution was adopted, negroes had been and were still regarded as beings of an inferior order, "and so far inferior that they had no rights which the white man was bound to respect." That curdling

* 19 Howard's Reports, 393, Justices McLean and Curtis dissenting.

phrase was not forgotten ; and, though Taney uttered it merely as an historical conclusion, our people believed it to express the real sentiment entertained by himself and his Southern colleagues on the bench towards the oppressed ; and in that sense they interpreted it. Taney had many admirable traits of character, being learned in the law, painstaking, upright, and full of dignity ; that he could take odium unflinchingly he had shown when, as Jackson's secretary, he removed the deposits. But he was wanting in the flow of healthy blood, and henceforth to a large fraction of Americans he seemed almost a vampire, hovering in the dim twilight. Not difficult was it to rake together a heap of rubbish testimony from colonial acts, the writings of European publicists, and the statute-books moreover of our original thirteen States. But where was the clear letter of the Constitution that set an eternal doom upon the inheritors of an Ethiopian skin ? For Indians, it was admitted, the red race, were placed in no such unfortunate category. Where was the rising sun of the American revolution, to dissipate this festering mass of misconception ? Where were the hopes, the wishes, cherished by Franklin, by Washington, by Jefferson, Adams, Hamilton, Madison, and all the chief framers and expounders of our perfected Federal system, under whose benign influence freedom was carried into new territories, State after State was induced to emancipate, and the African slave-trade became abolished as a sin and piracy ? Where, too, was Lord Mansfield and that world-renowned decree, rendered while the old thirteen were still loyal colonies, which declared that the slave who once touched foot on English soil was irresistibly free ? Jefferson, when President, had demanded black seamen, American slaves by ancestry, who had been dragged by British officers from the deck of the "Chesapeake," as "native citizens of the United States." But Jefferson's generalities fared badly from his Southern countrymen in these days ; for the Chief Justice asserted — and thousands echoed the thought — that the Declaration of Independence never meant to include black men when proclaiming that "all men are

created equal." Finally, to touch upon the more technical merits of the Dred Scott case, the plaintiff's domicile was viewed as though he had fixed or changed it of his own free will, and with no inquiry as to his master's domicile, and no regard to the important fact that the latter had gone from one place to another under the military orders of the United States government, carrying the negro with him.

Precedents like Mansfield's immortal one may light a long pathway, but the beacon of a false precedent sinks into the quicksand upon which it is built. Judgments, as the world goes on, are overlapped, overgrown, overwhelmed by precedents; courts change in the persons that constitute them; a decision operates only in a single example; and of all perversions of right, judicial perversion is borne the least patiently, because the fountain, polluted at its source, must be purified or stopped. Dred Scott, the lay-figure in this solemn mummery for the regulation of Kansas, served his purpose to the politicians, and soon obtained by the grace of his master that freedom which the courts of justice denied him. But the virus of the views promulgated by this highest tribunal of the land corroded the Southern heart, and the poles of our confederated system diverged more widely.

Buchanan showed an imbecile fidelity to Southern principles, by swallowing whole the *ipse dixit* of the court, or rather of its slaveholding fraction, even to the last morsel. Discriminating legal friends still hesitated to regard what was spoken *obiter* as part of the decision; but to his mind it grew clear as Bible truth that the people of a territory could not hinder or exclude the holding of slaves until it was time to come into the Union as a full-fledged State. The court had ruled it so, and he wondered presently that intelligent men could ever have thought it otherwise. So much, then, for the first twist to that "happy conception" he had so applaudingly commended, when taking his oath, — that of leaving the majority of the territorial settlers perfectly free to regulate the vexing question in their own way. And now, with the Missouri compromise naturally dead, by

coroner's inquest law, and decently interred, let us see squatter sovereignty working out its course like a blind mole.

Unhappy Kansas remained fast bound to the wheel of legitimacy. Fraudulent legitimacy was this, to be sure, — legitimacy which represented but one side; but President Buchanan adhered to the principle inflexibly, like Pierce before him. Geary, we have seen, had come to Washington to determine his fate;* he found the cards against him, and threw up his hand, leaving the new President free to fill the place to suit himself. Three stalwart governors of Kansas had failed in turn, — Reeder, Shannon, and Geary; the fourth selection was an extraordinary one, of no less a personage, in fact, than Robert J. Walker, the quondam associate of our new President in Polk's cabinet, and financier in the Mexican war. Astonishing must it seem that one of such prestige and reputation could have taken up with a post so inferior and uninviting. But Walker had a knack at both small things and great, and Buchanan pressed the position upon him with importunity, knowing well his skill in straightening out political troubles where legislatures were concerned. In fact, as Walker conceived his mission, the idea was already given up of dragooning Kansas into a slave State, and the effort would be rather to manipulate it into the next best condition of a State faithful to the slaveholding Democracy. At first declining the place altogether, our shrewd little statesman considered and accepted, upon the President's earnest persuasion that the safety and entirety of the Union were here at stake; and he accepted, upon a well-founded assurance that the administration concurred with him in the genuine belief that the actual *bona fide* residents of Kansas must be permitted, by their fair, free, and regular vote, to decide for themselves whether slavery or freedom should be their condition under a State Constitution.† Possibly the administration had not taken

* *Supra*, p. 363; Spring, c. 9.

† See President's letter, and Robert J. Walker's testimony before the Covode investigating committee (1860); 21 Harper's Magazine, 113.

the wily ex-Secretary quite at his word ; but it seems more likely that the President yielded to unexpected Southern pressure afterwards, and deserted his new governor to please the Cobb clique of his cabinet.

Be this as it may, Walker, instead of announcing the liberal programme thus agreed upon for Buncombe merely, proposed to earn the gratitude of the true settlers of Kansas by putting it into honest effect. His territorial secretary, Frederick P. Stanton, a talented and high-toned young lawyer who had served in Congress, was despatched as the forerunner of the new policy ; and Walker, on his own tardy arrival, labored with equal fervency to secure the confidence of the free-State colonists, who were now pouring into the territory in a rapid stream. The political indictments for treason against their leaders were quashed ; and Robinson, when tried some months later for usurping the office of governor, was acquitted by a jury.

April-May.

Among the acts of the pro-slavery legislature which Geary, the late governor, had vetoed to no purpose, was that which called a convention at Lecompton to frame a State Constitution. It did not provide a submission of the convention's work to the inhabitants, nor was the census ordered as a basis for electing delegates an impartial one. For these reasons, and because they were still disinclined to recognize the ruffian legislatures in any way, the free-State men abstained from the convention. In vain did Governor Walker urge them to propose delegates and go to the polls ; that the legislature which had ordered this convention was the only legitimate one. When asked what guaranty he could give that the elections would be fairly conducted, " You must obey the territorial laws," was his reply, " and vote as they direct." The machinery of the Lecompton convention was worked by pro-slavery settlers to their own ends ; but the free-State men, who had let it severely alone, were still assured and reassured by the governor that the whole people of Kansas should have an opportunity to express their will freely and solemnly upon any Constitution that this convention might frame.

Walker at length succeeded in impressing his idea that the Topeka effort must be laid wholly aside, and that no way lay open to reform but through capturing the *de facto* legislature, already recognized by two successive administrations in turn at Washington. The free-State settlers, who had lately allowed the convention elections to go against them by default, came forward in early October and struggled to renovate the next legislature.
October 5.

As well mix oil and water into a palatable draught as try to stir the pioneers for freedom and slavery into a harmonious body politic. The election was hotly contested, but Missouri intermeddlers were kept off; and despite all the disadvantages of a "hellish system of apportionment," cunning disfranchisement, and hostile election judges, the free-State party scored a decided victory. It was a red-letter day for liberty; and Walker, true to his professed determination to have an honest count, secured to the majority the full fruits of their triumph by throwing out a return clumsily forged, the last desperate effort of the reprobates who had been overruled to change the verdict of the ballot-box. Judge Cato's mandamus could mend nothing, and the official proclamation soon showed that the free-State party had won nine of the thirteen councilmen, and twenty-four of the thirty-nine representatives.*

But slavery still held the constitutional convention as a September last citadel, and concerted with its friends in the 7-November 7. Federal capital to make this a last and effectual means of bringing Kansas into the Union as a slave State. John Calhoun, surveyor-general of the territory, was made presiding officer of this convention, which, meeting at Lecompton on the 7th of September, had adjourned over the election we have described, after organizing, and met once more towards the close of October. The scheme now adopted by the delegates to retrieve disaster was at Calhoun's instance, and is said to have been a cabinet concoction which he brought all the way from

* Spring's *Kansas*, c. 10; newspapers.

Washington. A new State government of a pro-slavery hue was to be organized under his sole personal supervision,—Walker and Stanton being by this time discredited in the ruling circle of the administration,—and a pro-slavery Constitution forced in the meantime upon Kansas, without giving the majority of its inhabitants any further concern. This latter project, however, was too much of a departure from the theory of self-government for the more squeamish delegates to endure. They did not stickle at saddling a community which was anti-slavery by more than two to one with a pro-slavery Constitution, and asking Congress to admit Kansas as a State on the strength of it. But they were sorely perplexed upon the point of non-submission to the people; and finally, by a compromise, the convention agreed to defer to the inhabitants upon one point only. They might vote upon the slavery article in the proposed instrument, and nothing else. On a stated day ballots were to be cast in the territory, either "Constitution with slavery," or "Constitution without slavery." It was much like that old selfish committal to luck, "Heads I win, tails you lose;" for the whole instrument was so drawn up that there was good reason to opine that slavery could be kept in by judicial jugglery, whichever way the vote went, inasmuch as this charter made no point of abolishing or expelling slavery, but rather aimed to protect existing rights. Moreover, in order that one might vote slavery out of this Constitution, he had got to commit himself to the Constitution in all other respects, and, if challenged, swear that he would support it if adopted. And finally, as a prescribed consequence of this thimble-rigging ratification by the people, the same revolutionary sovereignty was to result as under the exploded Topeka scheme. State officers and members of a State legislature were to be at once voted for, and foreclosure made of the whole territorial machinery which the free-State party had so hardly captured in the late October election. Calhoun, the president of this convention and sole executor of its testamentary purpose, proclaimed December 21st as the day for voting

on the slavery article, and the 4th of January following for the choice of State officers and members of a legislature.

This whole high-handed tyranny caused intense excitement in and beyond the limits of Kansas. Governor Walker, who felt its evident supersedure of his official functions, condemned the Lecompton convention and its

^{November-} work in loudly emphatic terms. He hastened to ^{December.} Washington to lodge his protest against a local conclave which had stocked the pack to cheat free labor out of its honest rights, and claimed that those pledges of a free and full submission of the proposed framework of local government to the people of the territory should now be fulfilled, to which he and his secretary had pledged themselves upon the President's personal assurance. But he found on his arrival that the Lecompton scheme, in its whole length and breadth, had already the inflexible approval of the President and his cabinet. And more than this, he found that Southern ultras were already execrating him as a turncoat, and calling for his official head. The temper of the administration towards him was soon shown by the summary removal of his secretary, Stanton, whom he had left behind as acting governor. He next succumbed to the evident wishes of the Executive; and Walker's conspicuous name was added to the list of officers, less illustrious, who had failed to rule this distant reservation of squatter sovereignty to suit the wishes of the slave-holders.

This autumn saw a financial crisis of that kind which is ^{August-} apt to recur in an expanding country like ours as ^{October.} the cycle advances from booming prosperity to the over-confident and over-productive stage. But the present panic, unlike former ones, seemed to begin not at the extremities but at the heart, like an epilepsy. A rapid decline in the value of railroad stocks and bonds from June to September was the first symptom of trouble shown by the barometer of the New York stock exchange. Banks began contracting their loans to save themselves, and then came, in August, the unexpected failure of the Ohio Life

and Trust Company. This first real blow to public confidence was followed in rapid succession by the failure of railroad, insurance, and banking companies, and mercantile houses at the East, all tangled in one another's calamities. Large defalcations were brought to light; houses hitherto of the highest reputation, connected with the iron, cotton, or woollen mills, were forced to suspend; and about the middle of October the crash culminated when the banks of New York city, pressed by the excited crowds about their doors, suspended specie payments, setting an example which most other banks throughout the Union, which had not already done the same, were glad to follow.

That season of the year which is usually the most thriving for trade is the one which feels the full crush of financial calamity; for the hopes and plans of business activity for such a season, all too sanguine, have impelled that calamity forward. A hard winter, necessitating the stingiest economies, stared our people in the face. Of all the furnaces and forges in the Union, at least one half were closed; factories and machine shops discharged their workmen and remained idle; defaulting railroads went into the hands of bondholders, wiping out their capital stock; western farms and cities were forced to compose with creditors. Shipbuilding, too, which had lately been a proud national industry, now collapsed, and our ocean carrying-trade was for a time almost annihilated. The cold season brought much distress, especially in the large cities, for in New York's metropolis alone it was estimated that nearly 40,000 mechanics were thrown out of employment. Not for twenty years, at least, did so large a proportion of our people remain unwillingly idle.

Although the severity of this pressure gradually relaxed, and both confidence and activity were by another twelve months fairly restored, some lessons were left to be learned. Trade throughout the Union suffered from a defective currency, and still more from that redundancy of debt which over-confidence piles bravely up. The West owed the East; the interior owed the Atlantic seaboard; the Atlantic seaboard owed Europe. The South

with its cotton was relatively better off, yet the kingly staple suffered in market price. Enterprise had pushed, as our general buoyancy will always tempt it to push, way beyond present resources, in glowing discount of the future. Premature railroads at the West had fostered premature cities, teeming with premature traffic for a premature population; and while canals and railroads had conspired to reduce the mileage rate of transportation, the dispersion of American farmers over a vastly wider area counterbalanced that advantage. Our grain-fields were now in the heart of the continent and of the Mississippi valley, and it cost us actually more by the ton to exchange our wheat, corn, and meat for the metals, wares, and fabrics of Europe than it had done our ancestors ten years prior to the Revolution. The want, furthermore, of a stable and uniform national currency was deeply felt in this season of temporary reverse. Different States restrained their local banks by differing systems of financial policy. While elsewhere the number of banks was restricted by the old-fashioned plan, New York opened its free opportunities under a general law; and it was a comforting thought, even in the darkest days of stringency and suspension, that the bills of New York banks were fully secured by public stocks deposited with the State comptroller. As to the currency of most States, however, there could be no such consoling reflection. Whoever travelled in these years from Cincinnati or Chicago eastward, needed to carry on his person a heavy purse of gold coin for his journey's wants, with a good draft of exchange on New York, Boston, or some other chief eastern city, for what he might need besides. If foolish enough to take the crisp bills of some western State which circulated in the city which he left, and were paid him over the bank counter, he found them difficult to pass in Cleveland or Buffalo, and by the time he reached Albany he could do nothing with them. The vignettes and signatures of the myriad local banks whose bills circulated were alone worth an expert's study; they invited forgery of the most startling description; and every careful broker or financier

kept on his desk for reference the latest number of that almost indispensable periodical, the "Counterfeit Bank-note Detector."

The first months of a new national administration which precede the session of Congress are not apt to breed national elections of interest. Banks, the late Republican Speaker of the House, rescued Massachusetts, this fall, from the hard-bake of hunkerism into which Gardner and his American party had finally settled, and stumping the State in person, — an innovation which to New England seemed almost scandalous where dignities so high were contended for, — he won it for the Republican cause by more than 20,000 majority. In most New England States, in fact, as well as the Northwest, Republicans still held their ground, with reduced ranks; of governors they re-elected Chase in Ohio, Randall in Wisconsin, and Lowe in Iowa; but Pennsylvania chose William F. Packer, the Democratic candidate, and New York gave another triumph to the administration in a contest over inferior State officers. The apathy of such a season, hard times, and the natural reaction from the exciting campaign of 1856, were all unfavorable to the Republicans. It was early for the Lecompton tyranny to enter into general politics, and even the Dred Scott decision had scarcely advanced beyond the first quarter of a judicial encyclical.

In the progress of political strife, from our national point of vision, it was apparent that the American or Know-Nothing party had now nearly evaporated. In New York, for instance, the decaying lodges had turned over their tinsel and insignia to help out the triumph of the Democrats; in our free States generally they divided by radical or conservative affinities, and our whole country was fast settling upon geographical lines of political action to which, as we shall soon see, things tended inevitably. Buchanan Democracy had started out as the pure embodiment of all that was national, conservative, unsectional in spirit. But that fanciful presentation was not

long to last. Democracy showed symptoms already of approaching disruption; and in each and every faction Southern and pro-slavery ideas necessarily dominated to a greater or less degree. The old Democratic party of Andrew Jackson was essentially the party under whose shelter slavery pushed for dominion; while on the other side the Republicans, against all dogmas, whether extra-judicial or otherwise, held firmly to the faith of the most enlightened fathers, that slavery in new territories was an evil which Congress could and ought in conscience to regulate. "We must struggle constantly for free labor and free soil in Kansas," was the injunction of their leaders, "and thus, by making good our faith, keep Nebraska, New Mexico, Dakota, and Utah from coming in hereafter as slave States."

The thirty-fifth Congress convened on the 7th of December. It was the last time that both Houses held sessions in their accustomed rooms, for the new wings of the capitol extension were now nearly finished, which drew their deliberations further apart; and large oblong halls whose warm and gorgeous coloring relieved the dull symmetrical effect soon supplanted these curved and elliptic chambers through whose queer side-windows, unlike the new skylight expedients, streamed God's free sunshine. On the 15th of the present month the Representatives moved into their more commodious chamber, rejoiced to find it one where speeches could be heard. The Senate less gladly vacated, about a year later, that cell of the giants, whose concave vault, bounded by the rainbow span, and pierced with wheel-shaped windows, reverted to the judiciary. No wonder that Nestors like Crittenden, who recalled the illustrious inhabitants of these scenes, now at rest, whose national compacts and influence seemed already perishing, should have cast behind a longing, lingering glance.

A solid minority was seen for free soil where rare individuals had once raised their voices, yet the administration had a decided majority in each branch. The House organ-

ized at once by the choice of James L. Orr, of South Carolina, as Speaker, a man of Southern views and good address, sensitive upon preserving the decorum of debate.* The President's message, which was transmitted the next day, gave the first impulsion to the entering-wedge of Democratic schism, by urging the admission of Kansas as a State under the Lecompton Constitution.† A special message to the Senate soon followed, which announced the removal of Stanton and the appointment of John A. Denver, an Indian commissioner, in his place, as secretary and acting governor, a change which the Senate sustained in secret session, Walker resigning soon after.

But the decisive struggle over Lecompton was deferred until official results arrived from Kansas. We have seen that the convention, elected by a minority of the voters, had declined to submit its whole work to the people of the territory, making, however, a pretence of submitting the question of slavery or no slavery, by taking the sense of the inhabitants upon inserting a certain clause. The day fixed for this vote was December 21st, and the free-State men, once more refractory, stayed away from the polls; so that, quite to the dismay of many Northern friends of the administration in Congress, the pro-slavery clause was adopted by about ten to one. The choice of State officers under the new Constitution came next in the programme, on the 4th of January. The free-State men hesitated whether to abstain from this election as they had abstained from the last; and, in fact, they divided,—some thinking that, with Calhoun in charge of the returns, the dice were loaded too heavily against them; others arguing, with better reason, that so long as the chance was left the majority should make every effort to capture the new government as they had captured the old. Meantime the territorial legislature, or old legitimacy renovated, met at

* Orr was chosen by 128 votes against 84 cast for Galusha A. Grow, of Pennsylvania, a Republican with sharp angles, who could not command the full strength of his party.

† President's annual message, December 8, 1857.

Lecompton on the 7th of December, convened by Stanton at the cost of his official head; and, with appropriate discretion, that body ordered that on the same day with these new elections, authorized by the late convention, the Lecompton Constitution, that convention's work, should be submitted unreservedly and as a whole to the sense of the

1858. people. That election day was a memorable one.

January 4 Slave-State men and a considerable part of the free-State settlers joined issue upon candidates for State officers and members of a State legislature; though the result long remained in doubt, since Calhoun, the dictator, pocketed the whole body of returns, a part of which had been falsified on their way to him, and refused to certify to anybody's election till Congress should first dispose of the admission of Kansas under the new Constitution. But upon the question of adopting that Constitution, for which the territorial legislature had called a count, the free-State men cast their ballots with right good will, and against that spurious child of Lecompton was polled a condemning majority of over 11,000. The slave-State party, to be sure, this time abstained in turn from voting; but the ballot was honest, at all events, and a fair comparison of these figures with those of the December election made it plain that Kansas by two to one preferred freedom to slavery, and scorned the yoke which fraud had fastened upon shoulders too unresisting.*

Blind to plain signs like these, deaf to the appeals and entreaties of fair-minded men in his party, who felt that the strain of Democratic principle was more than the party of Democracy could safely bear, and forgetful, too, of his own bland observations, when he took the oath, upon the beauty of leaving all crucial tests to the will of the majority, Buchanan now showed the real subserviency of his nature by taking sides with slavery, as his predecessor had done. No sooner did official intelligence arrive of what had transpired in Kansas than he transmitted to Congress

* Newspapers; Spring's Kansas, c. 10.

an elaborate message,* and undertook, with the aid of official patronage and his party majorities, to force through Congress the immediate admission of Kansas as a slave State, under a swindling Constitution, red and reeking with fraud upon the most fundamental of popular rights. The message was not, as many had expected it to be, weak and wavering, for the ground it took was open and decided, and its statement of the situation perversely partial. Southern leaders had been consulted in its composition, and passages had been altered to please them.† One need not blame the President at this lapse of time for recognizing the territorial legislature which began in fraud and outrage as the legitimate one; but why sanction the trick which subverted that legislature as soon as the free-State men gained honest control of it? Well might he have besought Congress to terminate this protracted contest which threatened the peace of the Union; but why expect to terminate it by admitting Kansas as a State under a minority Constitution, and a minority rule, on a specious promise to the oppressed people that, under the organic law they loathed, the majority might at some future period gain rightful control and set measures on foot for amending that Constitution under the forms of law?

Anticipating this step by the administration, Douglas had already launched out against the whole deceptive project with an energy and haughty defiance which did him honor. It was the most courageous stand of his whole political life, and brought him nearly in concert this winter with the Republicans, who execrated the President's message most heartily. "It is a perverted and incorrect history, from the beginning to the end," exclaimed Trumbull, of Illinois, in the Senate, who opened the debate upon this subject in a powerful and denunciatory speech. "The President wants Kansas admitted under the Lecompton

* Special message, February 2, 1858.

† See, e. g., Johnston's A. H. Stephens, c. 31. Some amendments which Stephens proposed were accepted by the President, while one which he "insisted on" was not.

Constitution, on the very ground that it violates the will of the people." After a spirited discussion in this strain,

February 2-8 the Senate referred the message to the committee

on the territories, having first rejected an amendment instructing that committee to inquire into the number and legality of the votes given in Kansas. In the House, where opposition was manifestly stronger, reference was carried, instead, to a select committee of fifteen, with instructions to inquire how the Lecompton Constitution was formed, and whether it accorded with the will of the people. This question of reference with an inquiry tested the disposition of Congress on the whole subject, and as a result the administration seemed strong enough to carry its point with the Senate but not with the House.* Harris, of Illinois, had offered the resolution which passed the latter body. To baffle his purpose, Orr, the Speaker, appointed on the committee eight members who were opposed to an investigation, against seven who favored it. This enabled Stephens, whose name was second on the list, to direct the conferences of the committee, suppress

March 3-12 all inquiry, and in the name of the majority report simply in favor of the admission of Kansas under the Lecompton Constitution. Harris and his minority were sustained by the House on submitting a question of privilege, but all the same the investigation was stifled.

Meantime in the Senate three reports had been presented: that of the majority, by Green, of Missouri, which argued that the abolitionists in Kansas disproved their own pretensions to numerical superiority, because they had not outvoted their opponents in legal times and at legal places; that of Collamer and Wade, in the minority, which contended that the Kansas territorial government had never been legally organized at all, but usurped by Missouri borderers; and

* The House vote stood 115 to 111 for the resolution of reference with an inquiry. The Senate rejected such a reference by 28 to 22. Congressional Globe.

that of Douglas separately, which maintained simply that the Lecompton instrument was not the work of the people of Kansas, and did not embody their sovereign will.

A lengthy debate which ranged angrily over two months brought out some fifty speeches in the Senate alone, and nearly every member of influence in either House expressed his views upon one side or the other. Stormy scenes occurred in the new Representatives' hall, whose appearance during a night session was strange and striking, as the mysterious yellow light from the pictured ceiling descended to illumine the interior. Here a free fight broke out on the floor when the bibulous Keitt assaulted Grow as a "black Republican puppy," and thirty members with fisticuffs strove to preserve the peace.* The President had foreboded not untruly, in the message under discussion, that clouds darker than ever yet threatened the Union would close upon the rejection of this opportunity to bring Kansas in as a slave State. "This question," said Toombs solemnly in the Senate, "involves the honor, rights, and safety of fifteen States, to whom the principle involved is of higher value than the Union itself." Hammond, of South Carolina, in the same branch, made one of those forced comparisons, such as Webster had excepted to in his 7th of March speech; he sneered at the toiling laborers of free States as "white slaves," "the mudsills of society."

Jefferson Davis had been compelled by sickness to pair off before a final vote could be taken. He it was with whom Stephens advised constantly and confidentially in managing the present cause for slavery.† The outspoken advocate on all such occasions for military force and com-

* Stephens, while rallying the full slaveholding strength for the votes on the exciting Lecompton question, was forced to admit privately that his section was shamefully represented in the House; some of his friends were too drunk to be brought into the hall when the roll was called. Stephens's Life, c. 31.

† Stephens's Life, c. 31.

pulsion, Davis left on record his frank dissent from the President's opinion that peace would follow the admission of Kansas under the Lecompton Constitution. On the contrary, he believed that troops, a detachment of regulars, must and ought to be kept there to establish the new government in power.

Buchanan had appointed but slowly to office, treasuring his patronage hitherto as a miser treasures his gold. But by such potent means, by threats and denunciation, and finally, when defeat seemed probable, by supplication almost on bended knees, the administration now strove with the anti-Lecompton members of the Democracy to make up the requisite majorities. Alarmed, too, at the situation, John Calhoun, who had prudently left the territory with the suppressed election returns, now gave out, as a reconciling inducement, that the free-State party had secured a majority of members elect in both branches of the new State legislature, and that he meant to count them in accordingly. Denver, the new governor, had, on the other hand, forwarded to Washington a statement showing the situation as he found it in Kansas, and urging the President not to present the Lecompton Constitution to Congress at all, but to advocate instead the passage of an enabling act, and allow the people to take a fresh start. But the administration would sanction no backward step in this business.*

Stifling all investigation into the singular conditions attending the latest polls taken in Kansas, the friends of that territory's admission under the Lecompton Constitution carried their bill through the Senate as an administration measure. Aware of the primary principle they were violating, they permitted at the last hour an explicit amendment to the bill which recognized distinctly that the people of Kansas might alter or reform their Constitution

* President Buchanan had the hardihood to respond to Denver's letter that he regretted he had not received the information sooner, "because he had prepared his message in relation to the Lecompton Constitution, and had shown it to several Senators, and could not withdraw it." Spring's *Kansas*, 231.

later after the forms of law. Another more pertinent amendment, which Crittenden had proposed, they rejected : it provided that the present Constitution should be submitted once more as a whole to the popular vote ; if accepted, that Kansas should be admitted accordingly ; but if rejected, that a new territorial convention should be called to frame another Constitution. Noble Crittenden, the last of the compromisers, spun the web of Harry Clay like a true disciple, but he could not hang it. The bill passed on the 23d of March, by 33 to 25 ; Bell and Crittenden, of the border States, who classed with Native Americans, joining the few Douglas Democrats, and the whole body of Republicans in the negative. Pugh, of Ohio,* Stuart, of Michigan, and Broderick, of California, alone among his waxen fellow-Democrats of this branch from Northern States, stood with Douglas.†

But freedom's battle was fought in these times in the House, and here the last vote was fixed for April 1st. Stephens, who led the Lecompton forces, had been laboring in vain to bring Northern representatives of his party into harmony. Members of the cabinet had passed most of the previous night in the new south wing nursing the doubtful cases. Anti-Lecompton representatives had conferred together upon the course to be taken. Never had the House been so full nor members in such a buzz of eager commotion as when the Speaker's hammer rapped to order on the stroke of noon. The routine business was hastened ; Senators who were on the floor button-holed the wavering to argue with them. As one o'clock approached, Harris, of Illinois, his days already numbered, was borne into the hall, a pallid face contrasting with thick black hair and beard ; and not a seat was left vacant, but that of another sick member from Missouri. Stephens, already on his feet, and looking, with boyish face and diminutive size, like one of the pages who stood

* Pugh voted nay in submission to the instructions of the Ohio legislature.

† Congressional Globe.

near him, opened the subject by moving to take up the bill from his special committee. Montgomery, of Pennsylvania, for the anti-Lecompton side, offered as a substitute the bill in substance which Crittenden had proposed in the Senate. Quitman then offered, instead, the Senate bill, shorn of its latest concession. Quitman's substitute was rejected by more than a two-thirds vote, after which the Crittenden-Montgomery substitute was adopted. At the announcement of this latter vote—120 to 112—the crowded galleries burst into loud applause, and the House adjourned without delay.*

Unfortunately this was not the last of the attempt to dragoon a new slave State into the Union under false pretences.

^{April.} Buchanan and his cabinet were still pertinacious; one branch adhered to its own bill, and the other to its substitute. Both Houses adjourned on the 12th to attend the funeral of the distinguished Benton, who died amid the scenes of his former renown a private citizen. On the 13th the Senate asked a committee of conference, to which the House assented on the following day, upon motion of William H. English, of Indiana, a Democrat who had acted hitherto with the anti-Lecompton party. The vote being a tie, the motion was carried by Speaker Orr's casting vote. Green, Hunter, and Seward composed this conference committee on the part of the Senate; English, Stephens, and William A. Howard, for the House. The majority made a report on the 23d, from which Seward and Howard dissented. It embodied a new bill looking to the admission of Kansas under the pro-slavery Lecompton Constitution, but probing about to get a blind acquiescence from its inhabitants. Kansas, it appears, had wished liberal donations from the

* Congressional Globe; newspapers. Of those who voted for the Crittenden-Montgomery substitute, 92 were Republicans (a solid array), 22 Democrats, and 6 border-State Americans. To these last, Stephens in his chagrin attributed mainly the defeat of the day. Johnston's Stephens, c. 31.

public land; and, working upon this desire, the new bill with sly insidiousness proposed a vote of the people on the question of accepting or rejecting a handsome largess. Should a majority vote to accept, Kansas would enter the Union as a State without further formalities, with the Lecompton Constitution fastened as a logical sequence. But if a majority should reject, admission as a State was postponed indefinitely, or at least until a census should show that Kansas had a full representative population of ninety-three thousand.

This degrading and dishonorable substitute, soon known as "Lecompton junior," was exposed in its weak parts as soon as presented. It simply proposed to bribe the harassed settlers into accepting a pro-slavery Constitution which they loathed, under the added penalty of being left out in the cold if they refused. The pitfall was carefully covered over, and admission as a State was made contingent — extraordinary postulate — upon taking a gift out of the national domain. Yet such was the facile disposition of Congress that the new report and substitute were accepted by both Houses on the last day of the month,* and the President's ready approval erected the bill into a law.†

But if the national legislature could be thus cajoled into an attempt to juggle Kansas into the Union under a discredited charter, not so was it with the intelligent free farmers, whose sense of independence had been insulted. The superficial victory of the Executive proved barren of gain; for when the polls were opened in August under the President's proclamation, pursuant to this act, ^{August 3.} the free-State voters of Kansas rallied, and, spurning both bribes and threats, they trampled under foot the largess of public lands and the Lecompton Constitution together, by a majority of ninety-five hundred.

* The Senate accepted by 30 to 22, Pugh now joining the majority; the House, by 112 to 103. Of the original force of Northern Democrats in the popular branch of Congress, scarcely half could resist this new Lecompton experiment.

† 11 Stats. at Large, 269.

They chose rather to wait in temporary exile than enter the Union under an imposture, and in that choice the administration and the ruling Southern set indulged them to their full bent. The most fatal of legislation—and may it ever prove in this republic the most fatuous—is that which seeks to usurp and corrupt the honest conscience of the governed.*

Southern leaders of slavery extension found cause for anxiety in the shifting fortunes of their young knight-errant, William Walker, whose type of the American crusader was wholly peculiar to these years. And in the ambition to appropriate misgoverned countries to the south of us whose fertile soil invited the cultivation of staples raised by slave labor,—an ambition baffled constantly by the solid repugnance of the North,—might be traced an impulsion to independence and a new Southern confederacy more powerful even, though less perceptible, than the humiliating defeat which impended in Kansas. Walker's star we have seen declining after a brief brilliancy, during which he shone as military ruler of Nicaragua.†

Under a treaty of capitulation procured from the
1857, April— Costa Ricans through the mediation of one of our
December naval officers in the vicinity, Walker and his principal officers were taken to Panama, whence they proceeded to New Orleans; the miserable remnant of his forces, many of whom had already perished, being aided in their return by the charity of those against whom their arms had been directed.

Undaunted by his failure, Walker now traversed the Union to organize all who sympathized with him into a league for furnishing the sinews of a new expedition of invasion. Ministers from the Central American republics showed great alarm, and he was closely watched by our government in consequence. In early November, just as

* Buchanan seems to have found some philosophic comfort in his present failure. See his Defence, cited 2 Curtis's Buchanan, 208.

† *Supra*, p. 365.

his preparations were completed, he was arrested in New Orleans on a charge of violating the neutrality laws, but was released upon giving bail, which he afterwards forfeited. Overtaking his steamer, which, with some two hundred followers on board, had already cleared at the custom house, he took arms and supplies on board at Mobile bay, and then pointed his course to Greytown, where, after having landed a detachment twenty miles farther south, he arrived on the 25th of the month.

In early December, the United States frigate "Wabash" sailed into Greytown harbor. Commodore Paulding, an honest and brave officer, who interpreted his orders as they were issued, made short work with Walker's new enterprise. He dispersed the camp of the filibusters, and shipped the men home disarmed, permitting Walker upon his own parole to take the regular steamer from Aspinwall to New York. The detachment which had been landed below Greytown was similarly dealt with.

The news of this naval prowess reached Washington at the time when Kansas and Lecompton were the great topics of excitement. Walker went thither in person on landing, and presented himself as a prisoner of State; but Secretary Cass refused to consider him as such, alleging that jurisdiction belonged to the courts. Buchanan sent to Congress a special message on the subject,* which betrayed a sense of the difficulty he labored under in trying to please the Southern annexationists, and at the same time perform his official duties according to statute law, his own manifestoes, and the expectation of the Union at large. Private filibustering he had strongly condemned in his opening message. But Paulding, it appears, had cast aside rigid formalities in order to apply an international rule with honor and effect, regarding Walker and his followers simply as outlaws who had escaped the vigilance of the courts. Southern fire-eaters challenged the right of making such an arrest on foreign

* President's special message, January 7, 1858.

soil, and the President in his message declared that our commodore had committed "a great error." But the capture, he added, had been made with pure motives; Walker's expedition was lawless and mischievous; and as Nicaragua had sustained no injury, these invaders had no right to complain in her name.

This comment and this mode of handling the subject did not please the Southern leaders in Congress; but they held back from denouncing the President, lest his support should be endangered in the pending Lecompton bill.* Their strong sympathies were with Walker; and of course they expected that Walker, if successful, would introduce African slavery into Central America.† Quitman, whose sands of life had nearly run out, signalized his brief career in the House by trying to procure the repeal of our neutrality laws,—that thorn in the flesh of all private conquests like the Cuban which had dazzled his own imagination. He had believed, and it was fast becoming a fixed article in the Southern faith, that empire moved much too slowly under the public direction,—that neither Mexico, Central America, nor precious Cuba, could come under the stars and stripes, unless private crusaders broke the way. Walker himself, as he journeyed through the Gulf States, where he found enthusiastic welcome, avowed that he would persevere at all hazards in his Nicaraguan invasion. "I have not," he fervidly protested, "violated the laws of the United States; my only crime is that I was born in the South, and have endeavored to advance her interests." But it was in vain that he demanded redress for his ignominious capture.‡

* Johnston's A. H. Stephens, c. 31.

† Ib.

‡ Newspapers; Congressional Globe. After some spirited debate in the Senate, where Brown and Slidell took decided ground against the President, a sanctimonious report was made by the committee of foreign relations, which allowed Commodore Paulding to escape with a mild censure. Walker, in a Mobile speech, asserted (whether truthfully or not) that one of Buchanan's cabinet, whose name he did not give, had sanctioned his expedition, advised him as to the details of landing, and assured him that our vessels of war would give him countenance.

Rebellion in Utah — that far-off territory where a population of aliens submitted to a strange hierarchy — was an issue that forced comparisons with Kansas. It was not the suppression of polygamous practices that our administration cared for, — for the Republicans might engross all moral agitation for their own party benefit, — but to keep these strange settlers obedient to the Constitution and the laws. Even in the latter sense alone, Utah contradicted that pompous formula of non-intervention by the general government which had been preached up so strongly for Kansas. For what boots it to spill the nation's blood and treasure in acquiring new territory, that hostile and treacherous systems may be planted and reared there by those who colonize ? National indulgence here had made Mormonism more defiant and disaffected to the Union. All the tenets and policy of that church, under its despotic leaders, had tended to secure an Israelitish seclusion, in contempt of all external and temporal authority. To this would-be "State of Deseret" * President Fillmore had assigned Brigham Young, the spiritual head of the church, as territorial governor; and by 1857, when a Democratic President showed the disposition to apply the usual temporal rule of rotation to the office, Young was rebellious, and the whole Mormon population, refusing allegiance to any one but their consecrated head, began to drill and gird on their armor for resistance. Judges of the territorial courts had to flee for their lives; justice, which had long been tampered with to absolve church members from punishment, was deprived of process. It was charged that the Mormon hierarchy had leagued with Indian tribes to impel them to atrocities against the Gentile inhabitants, while their own Danites, or destroying angels, were secretly set apart and bound by horrid oath to pillage and murder such as made themselves obnoxious to the theocracy. This was popular sovereignty with a vengeance.

* *Supra*, p. 147.

President Buchanan appointed as the new governor of Utah Alfred Cumming, a man combining courage with discretion, and filled the judicial and other vacancies which existed. To protect those new officers and aid them in discharging their functions, he ordered a detachment of regulars to accompany them to the Salt Lake region. The need of this was soon apparent. Early in September, 1857, a part of the troops left Fort Laramie, and on the 15th of the same month Brigham Young, parading audaciously the commission he still held from the United States, forbade all armed forces from entering the territory, and called upon his people to defend themselves against the "armed mercenary mob" of invaders. His legislature, meeting later, sustained him in his bitter diatribe against the "profane, drunken, and corrupt officials," which a Washington administration was trying to force upon Utah territory at the point of the bayonet. A Mormon force had meanwhile advanced to impede the approach of our regulars, capturing and burning three supply trains of wagons laden with tents and provisions, stampeding the horses, and so crippling Fort Bridger, which was distant some twelve days' march from Salt Lake city, as to deprive our army, on its arrival, of a proper winter's shelter after its long and fatiguing march, and compel General Johnston, who commanded this important post, to despatch part of his forces upon a dreary and hazardous expedition to New Mexico for further supplies.

Johnston's despatches in October showed the President that unless a large force was quickly sent out, a long conflict would be inevitable. Buchanan and his Secretary of

1857-58 War asked from the present Congress ten new regiments, of which five might be used to bring the Mormons to subjection. But the Lecompton controversy was raging; and the use of Federal troops to put down the free-State movement in Kansas had caused such mistrust and irritation that none but the President's unshaken supporters felt inclined to place more troops at his disposal. The bill for an army increase was lost, though both Houses passed a measure authorizing the Presi-

dent to accept for the Utah disturbances two regiments of volunteers.*

The volunteers were not called out; but Buchanan mustered a military force out of the regulars strong enough to overawe and overpower Utah's rebellious inhabitants. Two peace commissioners also bore to Utah a proclamation from the President, dated April 6th, which offered free pardon, except to those who persisted still in disloyal resistance. Governor Cumming, upon his arrival, made a like announcement. These conciliatory efforts, backed by an irresistible show of military strength, brought the Mormons to a speedy acknowledgment of allegiance. They fought not a battle, but manifested a purpose to burn their houses and make a new and peaceable retreat into the wilderness. From this purpose, after some conferences, they were at length dissuaded; and it was agreed in June between the Mormon leaders and our commissioners that the United States soldiery should be kept out of sight as much as possible while Utah remained tranquil. On the last day of the same month the new governor, accompanied by Brigham Young, came back to Salt Lake city to assume functions which were fully recognized. A few days earlier, and before the Mormons had begun to return to their homes, General Johnston and his troops, leaving Fort Bridger, reached the desolate city, marched through its streets, and crossing its river Jordan encamped on the opposite bank.

While abandoning all further effort at violent resistance, the Mormons still clung to the hope of being left to govern themselves and preserve their institutions against the world's contaminating touch, by gaining the indispensable condition of practical isolation and independence. To this Congress in its next winter's session they renewed the former petitions they had presented for immediate admission to the Union as the "State of Deseret." And should this request be denied, they prayed that ^{1858-1859.} the organic act of the territory might be so

* Act April 7, 1858, c. 13.

amended as to give the inhabitants the right to choose their own governor, judges, and other officers. All this Congress quietly ignored ; and in military circles it was still generally believed that, for all this outward show of loyal acquiescence, the Mormons felt at heart no more affection for the United States than for any foreign nation ; that the only rule they really recognized was that of their religion and the will of their hierarchy ; and that force must still be used to compel them. Such views were entertained by General Albert Sidney Johnston, the military

commander at Utah, destined to later distinction

^{1859.} in the art of war. But Cumming, the governor, who had the temporizing instincts of a civilian, thought differently. The two came into collision when Mormons were brought to trial in the courts for a slaughter of emigrants in 1857, known as the Mountain Meadow massacre. At the request of the Federal judge, Johnston furnished a military detachment to guard the prisoners ; and when Cumming, the governor, interposed because of the angry remonstrance of the people, Johnston would not remove them. Buchanan, being appealed to, sustained the governor's authority.*

It is pleasant to turn from these scenes of territorial turmoil and discipline and take a last glimpse at the onward car of science. The latest triumph of American invention,

^{1858.} though celebrated quite prematurely, was the laying of the Atlantic cable, which moored the two great hemispheres for close confabulation, as though no swelling ocean rolled between. Ever since the Crimean war, when a submarine telegraph worked readily whose wires stretched under the Black Sea for three hundred and forty miles, this mightier project had been discussed. Twenty or more shorter lines were already in operation in different parts of the world, and since 1851 the electric spark had traversed the deep busily from

* See newspapers ; Congressional Globe, Message of December 6, 1858, and report of Secretary of War.

Dover to Calais. But this far greater enterprise required both faith and capital ; and, aided by strong financiers in London and New York, Cyrus W. Field, an American, formed companies on both sides of the Atlantic, ¹⁸⁵⁴⁻¹⁸⁵⁷ raised the needful funds to launch his experiment, and procured the favorable interest of the governments of Great Britain and the United States for the vast project.

A cable had first been laid across the Gulf of St. Lawrence from Cape Breton Island, and a connecting line carried over barren Newfoundland from the western point of its sea-coast to Trinity Bay on the east. The project now left for accomplishment, and the grand one, was to lay an ocean cable from this Trinity Bay to Valencia Bay, Ireland, the British terminus, a distance of from 1,650 to 1,700 geographical miles. The United States steamer "Niagara," the largest man-of-war afloat, joined the British steamer "Agamemnon," lately the flag-ship ^{1857,} in the Black Sea, in the friendly international ^{August} task of laying the cable. At the first attempt in 1857, the cable soon broke. Fresh exertions were made in the following summer, with more chain and better machinery. The "Niagara" and "Agamemnon" ^{1858,} ^{June, July.} divided between them the huge wire coils, and on the 29th of July proceeded from their common rendezvous in mid-ocean to pay out the cable in opposite directions. It was good to see these arks of death freighted with such peaceful implements. Old ocean smiled this time ^{August.} as when Columbus of yore last probed a passage. Early on the 5th of August the "Niagara," westward bound, dropped the end of its line in Trinity Bay, after a smooth and easy voyage ; the "Agamemnon," having weathered a gale, reached Valencia. Signals were transmitted through the long metallic line ; and on the 16th of August, when the telegraphic apparatus was ready, salutations on the completion of the work were exchanged under the sea between Queen Victoria and the President of the United States. These, as pre-arranged, were the first messages transmitted ; and later, on the 25th, came

news which the press published on the 26th,— the first business despatch, and fitly a message of peace; it announced the treaty which closed war with China.

What a new and tingling sensation was this — a foretaste of the time when the whole world might be girdled in easy conversation. With Europe and America seemingly united, enthusiasm pervaded the two continents

^{September.} simultaneously. In our chief Atlantic cities, bits of the superfluous cable were hawked about which showed segments of fine wires, like knitting-needles, bound together and incased in gutta percha. On the 1st of September, the day already set for opening the telegraph to general business, a splendid procession, military and civic, paraded the streets of New York city; and at a public banquet in the evening, Field, the projector of the Atlantic cable, was feasted as an illustrious fellow-citizen. Unfortunately, the enterprise had passed only its first stage; mysterious defects of insulation hindered and then stopped the transmittal of messages through the brine. The cable, from some cause or another, proved a failure, and our business men went on in the old way corresponding by the ocean mails, and our presses continued boarding the Liverpool steamers off St. John's or Halifax for eight momentous years longer.* This very September a mammoth mercantile steamer, the "Great Eastern," sprawled in the British docks for a purchaser, having swamped already in debt the company which undertook to build it; and this, after all, was the vessel which at a long interval was to lay the cable through which ocean messages were practicable.

Dark clouds were on our horizon foreboding a longer postponement of the victories of peace. To what new and unexplored service, before this century closed, would elec-

* The humors of our popular disappointment at this failure of the Atlantic cable were touched off at the time by Oliver Wendell Holmes in a little poem in one of his "Autocrat of the Breakfast Table" papers, then in course of publication. "De Sauty," whose Delphic announcements showed the last expiring throes of the cable, was the mysterious electrician stationed at Trinity Bay, — nomen et præterea nihil.

tricity yet be applied, that strange magician among natural agents whom Franklin caught wild upon his kite. But all this came not into the vista of the present era. Our overland telegraph, like that of the Atlantic, had longer to wait. The greatest feat of this era in shortening communication across the continent was by the pony express, which in 1860 brought news from the California slope in twelve days to St. Joseph, whence it was telegraphed to New York. We had begun to weaken in our rivalry with Great Britain for ocean supremacy ; and our Collins steamship line, raced and lobbied to death, went under in the panic of 1857.

The elections showed this year that, while Southern sectionalism was creeping upward from the gulf into the border States, our Northern people condemned most vehemently Lecompton and the Dred Scott pronunciamento. Republicans regretted that Missouri should have chosen an entire Democratic delegation to the next House,—Francis P. Blair, the younger, failing of re-election in the St. Louis district, where a gradual emancipation party had within the past year gained some headway with the help of German votes. In Kentucky, Tennessee, and North Carolina, conservative Americans, or those content to leave slavery where it was, shared honors with the aggressive Democrats ; and so was it with Maryland, which chose a governor of the American party in Thomas H. Hicks. On the other hand, New England was now a solid phalanx under the Republican banner. Northwestern States, like Ohio, Iowa, Indiana, Michigan, were winning over their Democratic doubters. In New York, where a desperate attempt was made to unite the entire opposition to this geographical party upon a common State ticket, Edwin D. Morgan, the Republican candidate, and a respected merchant of New York city, was chosen governor by a plurality of over 17,000, while more than three fourths of the Congressional districts were captured by the friends of free territory. The administration and its friends were sadly discomfited. But Buchanan's

most signal rebuke came from his own State of Pennsylvania, which gave more backbone to its delegation in Congress, elected an anti-administration ticket for State officers by more than 20,000 majority, and resolutely turned its back upon the South, whose faithful handmaid it had been for full three-score years.*

The contest in Illinois, which raged fiercely, was one of singular interest, and later events made it national and historical. Here Stephen A. Douglas canvassed for his re-election to the United States Senate, and the Democratic State convention had cast in its lot with him, approving his recent course on the Lecompton Constitution, which, indeed, was the only one that could have kept Illinois longer to the sheet-anchor of the Jacksonian faith. The hand of the administration was laid heavily upon him for his recreancy, and the Federal patronage was used stealthily, though all in vain, to crush out his local domination. Against him the Republican State convention put Abraham Lincoln boldly in nomination for the Senatorial succession; forestalling, like the Democrats opposed to them, the chances of bribery and intrigue in a representative body of electors, by carrying candidates before the people directly through the choice of legislators pledged to the one or the other,—an example worth imitating more frequently in State politics. Douglas's courage and independence in braving his former friends for the sake of giving to the people of Kansas a fair and honest vote, his championship, too, of popular sovereignty as a vital principle, increased immeasurably the devotion of his Democratic admirers, at the same time that it tempted those who had hitherto politically opposed him, to turn in generously and help re-elect him. Crittenden, in admiration of the sacrifice and hazard to which Douglas had exposed himself, indorsed him so warmly that Lincoln's appeal to the old and tender tie of fellow-Whig was in vain.† Republicans prominent in other States, among

* Tables in Tribune Almanac.

† 2 Coleman's Crittenden, 162-164.

whom was Horace Greeley, believed it was better policy to help than oppose the "little giant," sanguine that he might thus be detached from the pro-slavery interest and force a final breach in the Democratic party. But Lincoln and the Illinois Republicans thought differently. They believed that great popular movements could succeed only when guided by their faithful friends, and that a leader who had risen by courting the slaveholders, and who even now railed at the negro, and "did not care whether slavery were voted up or down," was no safe champion of free labor and free territory. This very principle of popular sovereignty — with its Satanic choice between good and evil, its false premise that when one man made another man his slave no third person nor the enslaved person himself had the right to object — was a deceptive hindrance to moral conviction, and the sense of national responsibility as citizens for the spread of a moral curse.

Douglas and Lincoln were formidable adversaries of one another, and a long linking of events had somehow opposed them in an antagonism which was permanent and inveterate. With a pathos almost bitter, Lincoln recalled that while through the long years they had pursued ambition by their different methods he had thus far failed, his rival had gained splendid success and a name that filled the whole Union with applause, — and yet honors that he said he would not have purchased at the price paid for them. With all his popular qualities, his great natural parts, the real love of country which mingled no doubt with all his dross of sycophancy and spread-eagleism, so that he could stir the heart by forceful appeals to patriotic feelings, Douglas, no doubt, as Lincoln regarded him, was cunning and unscrupulous in obtaining his ends. Lincoln himself was a sagacious politician, and not above advancing his own ends, where he could do so honorably; but earnestness grew upon him with years, and the new Free-Soil movement which followed upon the repeal of the Missouri compromise gave him a cause which enlisted his whole heart, adding that incentive to leadership and mastery of his subject which the economic topics of Whig policy, his first political love, had ill supplied. Strong

impulse to a self-made man supplies the place of education. Lincoln, now in the full maturity of his powers, was without comprehensive knowledge of public affairs; but with a strong craving to dive into the depths of the truth, and a well-settled conviction that American slavery was wrong in itself and injuriously spreading, he had plunged into the study of the question in all its historical, moral, and constitutional aspects, and brought up a wealth of rich argument and illustration, which his lucid mind set forth in a quaint and original but strongly persuasive manner,—persuasive most of all with the plain multitude, with the millions of common men throughout the North with whom at this time Lincoln was in entire sympathy, and who, like himself, wished to reconcile loyalty to the Union and justice to Southern rights with obedience to a better law divine. In such minds grew up the strong belief that, while existing slave States were exempt from national interference, there could be no extension of the slave system further without national participation and a national crime.

Douglas, at Chicago, in early July, answered the speech
July—
^{September.} which Lincoln had made to the Republican con-vention on the evening of his nomination.* The two then carried on a joint debate at various interior towns between the 21st of August and the 15th of September,—thousands of the country folk gathering at each place by wagon or on foot, but no political flags or mottoes being allowed. Each orator presented most strikingly the strong points of his case, and neither the patronizing condescension nor the skilful thrusts of the famous statesman, who was by all odds the readiest speaker in the United States Senate, could disconcert for a moment his adversary, whose good humor warded off the shafts which were intended for ridicule. Genial and rollicking with the boys, and yet confident to the point of arrogance in a controversy, and even supercilious, Douglas aired his “care-nothing” views upon the moral aspects of slavery, and vaunted it as the generous and liberal policy of the age,—as the “great principle” for patriotic souls who

* Douglas had been nominated in April, and Lincoln in June.

knew no sectional limits to unite upon,—to acquire, extend, and expand our boundaries, leaving whomsoever might settle upon it to plant institutions, slave or free, as their own choice. Herein Douglas appeared to less advantage than in the late Lecompton debates, where he had been clearly right. Not careful to take his position justly, and feeling the need of reconciling his late votes with his whole former career as an active ally of the Southern Democracy, and of regaining what he could of their support presently, he was forced back to his old trick of misrepresenting Republican doctrines and jeering at “negro equality.” But he was a powerful and impressive man to gaze upon, looking with his small but compact stature like a lion’s whelp; he shook back his heavy hair, and in his most impressive passages roared with a loud voice, articulating thickly and making violent gestures. Lincoln’s power as an orator lay not less in his strong individuality; but tall, awkward in the use of his limbs, and with a voice piercing rather than melodious in his most animated periods, his charm flowed rather from the impression he gave that his convictions were genuine and his whole nature imbued with the simple and uncondescending love of his fellow-men.

It was not time yet for broad philanthropy to infuse the sentiment of Lincoln’s State. Douglas prevailed, as for various reasons it was natural he should have done. He was canvassing this time for political existence, against foes of his own party who were bent on destroying him. The hostility of the Buchanan cabinet towards him created friends among Republican opponents. Douglas had rendered a signal service to freedom. Sophistries might be forgiven to one who had helped Kansas out of the toils by them. The November elections of Illinois gave five Democrats to four Republicans for Congress, while in the State legislature there were members enough, including those who held over, to give the “little giant” a majority of eight on the joint ballot. But the popular verdict upon the contest of principle, aside from present candidates, was on the other side; and the Republicans of

the State, though defeated for the time, remembered their standard-bearer, "honest Abe," with proud affection and gratitude. Lincoln's campaign speeches achieved for him a splendid Western reputation; they were seen to be of a very high order,—pungent, clear as crystal in their logic and expression, and truly admirable as condensed statements of the national issues at stake.*

One remarkable statement drawn out from Douglas in this joint debate showed the schism which was widening in the Democratic ranks by the agency of the Dred Scott decision. According to the President, the slaveholders, and all who accepted the fiat of the court in that celebrated case, "the great principle of popular sovereignty" was largely restrained; for the right to hold slaves in a territory was declared by a majority of the judges to exist, by virtue of the Federal compact, until the territory grew to statehood, and chose to exclude the right under a State Constitution. This was no application of the Douglas dogma to canvass a Northwestern State upon; and Douglas, when pressed in debate for his opinion on this point, took the ground that, whatever the Supreme Court might decide on the abstract question, the people of a territory had the lawful means to introduce or exclude slavery as they pleased. For slavery could not exist a day or an hour unless supported by local police regulations, and the local legislature could "by unfriendly legislation" effectually prevent its introduction. This answer sufficiently commended Douglas to his constituents of Illinois for re-election to the Senate, but as a Presidential aspirant it sealed his doom, for the breach with the Southern and ruling wing of the Democracy was thenceforth irreparable.†

* Newspapers, Sheahan's Stephen A. Douglas, cs. 16, 17; 34 Century Magazine, 393. And see Schurz's admirable article on Lincoln in 67 Atlantic Monthly, 721.

† Lincoln, it is said, persisted in putting this question in debate, his friends advising against it because the answer, already foreseen, would help Douglas's canvass more than the skulking silence which he seemed disposed to keep. "I am after larger game," was Lincoln's answer. "If Douglas so answers, he can never be President, and the battle of 1860 is worth a hundred of this." 34 Century, 393.

Had Lincoln been equally exposed to public gaze at this time as a national candidate, he, too, might have suffered, like so many who appeal to popular favor, the victim of bold phrases. Though shrewd and practical at all times, disposed to confine himself to the immediate evil which needed correction, and scrupulous of all intervening rights, he could not have studied the stupendous problem of the times so profoundly as he had done without some prophetic forecast of the future. In his speech of acceptance he had said: "A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved,—I do not expect the house to fall; but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all of one thing or all of the other." No wonder that Lincoln's friends were troubled at this bold utterance. No wonder that his adversary tore at it with holy rage as abolition heresy, the advocacy of sectional war, fratricide, servile insurrection, and the blotting out of States. It happened that the same idea was expressed this autumn by Seward, in a Rochester speech, which pronounced in more ornate language the same prediction. There was, he declared, "an irrepressible conflict" between opposing and enduring forces, which, sooner or later, would make the United States either entirely a slaveholding or entirely a free-labor nation. It was not a new prophecy on his part, nor bolder than he had uttered years earlier;* but Seward was now the most eminent expounder of the Republican faith, and the most probable standard-bearer of his party for 1860; hence the phrase, which was caught up everywhere, made him a shining mark for his foes. Both Seward and Lincoln were right; and they proposed no brutal and bloody interference with Constitutional rights, but aid and comfort to the cause of emancipation where slave States were concerned, besides higher moral tone and purpose for all occasions. Freedom's host was still timorous; many of the politicians in council would have

* 2 Seward's Life, 351.

turned the Republican party out to browse among secular projects, now that Kansas had emerged from its worst plight; and the angry roar of dissent which went up from every quarter of the Union against the "irrepressible conflict" theory showed that loyalty was blind to the signs of the time.

The final session of this Congress need not long detain us. Buchanan accepted with philosophy the verdict of the people which bore so heavily upon his territorial policy. He had self-control enough to assume a bland and placid countenance, and sufficient statesmanship to try turning the public thought into some new channel. But his administration still served the slaveholders, and the next desperate effort was to launch the country in some foreign exploit whence slavery could derive its recompense. Occupied at the Department of State, during the lapse after the elections, in turning over the correspondence, he treated

^{December.} Congress, when that body met on the 6th of December, to a highly flavored dish of buzzard, continental acquisition. "Expansion," as he said in a White House speech soon after, responsive to a serenade, "is in future the policy of our country, and only cowards fear and oppose it."

Cuba, Mexico, and Central America were the prominent topics of the annual message. Spain's precious island we ought to purchase, and self-defence might compel us to annex it by force, unless the Castilian owner sold out as Napoleon had sold Louisiana. Mexico was crumbling to pieces under the feuds of revolutionary leaders, and now was the time to assume a protectorate over the Northern States of that Republic adjacent to our boundaries, and establish military posts. As to Nicaragua and Costa Rica, the closing of the transit route since 1856 was a grievance for which the employment of our land and naval forces ^{1859,} would be at this time in order.* On this latter ^{February.} point the President discoursed once more towards

* President's annual message, December 6, 1858.

the close of the session, beseeching Congress earnestly to authorize him to send down a military expedition to the neighborhood of the isthmus.* But the strongest pressure of this winter was in the direction of Cuba. Slidell, one of the President's most intimate friends, presented in the new Senate chamber a bill which proposed placing thirty million dollars in the hands of the Executive for negotiating the purchase of Cuba. The advantage that island would bring to the United States was glowingly and elaborately set forth by himself and others from the Gulf States, while the rest of the Senate listened with amazement, hardly believing the administration to be in thorough earnest. The session sped towards its close, and on the 26th of February Slidell withdrew his bill, with a solemn intimation that he should bring it forward again when the next Congress organized.† The suspicion and repugnance felt by the great mass of the community were reflected by the nation's representatives, for Buchanan's importunate recommendations went altogether unheeded. To quiet sectional strife by undertaking new sectional conquests was not treatment after the established methods of allopathy. Was a President so skilled in diplomacy really eager to initiate such promiscuous war? Or was he indulging the disappointed fire-eaters in the last experiments which left the Union tolerable to them?

All real lovers of the Union, and the milder slaveholders among them, mistrusted such wholesale and unconscientious invasion of the rights of other nations.‡ As for Cuba, Spain would have seen it sunk by an earthquake rather than allow it to pass at this time to the United States, and England and France were ready to back her determination. And through the obscure and tortuous

* Special message, February 18, 1859.

† Congressional Globe. Brown, of Mississippi, a friend of the measure, had on the previous day moved as a test vote to lay the bill on the table; the motion was lost by 30 to 18, and this was accepted as an encouragement to the bill.

‡ See 2 Coleman's Crittenden, 170-176.

diplomacy of our present dealings with the turbulent republics to the south of us, we may trace three strong and contending influences, — the disposition on the part of the United States, by private or public filibustering, to rob them of their territory in the name of manifest destiny; their own dread of this disposition, which made all negotiation difficult; and the secret concert of England and France to aid them in baffling such designs. Our prevailing tendency was to bully, and extort from these feeble imitators of our great Republic what we should never think of obtaining from the coequal sovereigns of the old world, among whom we now took rank. Under our earlier Presidents before Jackson we had pursued amity, and been their noblest exemplar. But now we gathered up little accounts against them, permitted our citizens to work haughtily into their brawls, and sent great armaments, like that to Paraguay of the present winter, to vindicate our national honor. The discreet arrangements made with Asiatic countries, with China and Japan, were vastly more to our credit than between the two oceans, where we should have been most potent.*

Had Cuba been desired for freedom, the aspect might have been different. It was true that this island was now an open market for slaves, and a flurry over the British "right of search" or "right of visitation" had lately occurred in consequence. Great Britain was trying to apply that once odious claim, in the interest of philanthropy, to forcibly suppressing the slave-trade. That belligerent pretension against American sailors which led to the war of 1812 had dwindled down to the mere police inspection of vessels flying false national colors who were suspected of African piracy. We have seen how such a concession

^{1858.} was avoided on our part in the Ashburton treaty of 1842.† England, in the spring of 1858, de-

* For the honorable treaty arrangements made with China in 1858, see U. S. Stats. at Large, 1023: 2 Curtis's Buchanan, 226; Message, December 6, 1858.

† Vol. iv., p. 402.

spatched to Cuba a number of small cruisers which had been employed in the Crimean war, with orders to board suspected merchantmen which approached or left that island. More than forty vessels flying the American flag being thus stopped and searched, it was not strange that the President should have taken strong steps to interfere, nor that Congress should have shown a readiness to place the resources of the nation at his disposal with great unanimity.* Prompt instructions were sent to Minister ^{May-} Dallas at London on the subject; and, without ^{December.} waiting for legislation, a large naval force was despatched to the Cuban waters. A happy explanation was made; the abuse of zealous naval officers ceased, and Lord Palmerston and the British ministry yielded so far as to disclaim all right to search or visit against our wishes. For Secretary Cass, so nearly superannuated that the President carried his portfolio most of the time for him, this was something of a triumph; yet after all, his zeal, his energy was expended, as he had expended it while minister to France, upon the right of searching to break up slave piracy. No assertion or application of the ancient claim had been made for long years in any other respect; and it was humiliating that all this defence of maritime rights should have the appearance, at least, of being in the interest of the slave-trade. The flag of the United States was being prostituted to the protection of this nefarious traffic, and we had no proposal to suggest for preventing the abuse which had given rise to the difficulty.†

The Cuban egg was put into the nest to be hatched in 1860. For an island which Spain was determined not to sell, we had not the thirty millions to pay. Under Cobb,

* "I would not ask any reclamation from England for such insults," wrote Stephens, furiously, "but I would seize her ships, if necessary, and explain myself afterwards." Johnston's A. H. Stephens, c 31.

† See 2 Curtis's Buchanan, 214; McLaughlin's Lewis Cass, 330. These authors seem to entertain the impression that the present correspondence was the end of a long controversy over the famous and original British claim of a right to search for former subjects.

the Secretary of the Treasury, our finances had been going from bad to worse, and the fiscal chest gave back a hollow sound when Congress knocked upon it. Partly from the disastrous effects of the last year's panic, partly because of incorrect estimates, extravagance, and a bad husbandry of resources, the treasury had incurred a serious deficiency. A prudent statesman in control of the exchequer when emergencies are not overwhelming will bring out the finances at least as well as he promises; but Cobb was the dupe of his own figures,—he would have sanguine fits, and then relapses.

There were many shrewd managers in the new Republican party, and an alliance had been forming ever since the money crash of 1857 between Pennsylvania and the New England States. Men of Whig antecedents everywhere fell naturally into the policy of home markets and a protective tariff, and the hope of recovering by such legislation the partial paralysis which the manufactures and mining interests had lately suffered had no little influence in carrying Pennsylvania against the Democrats at the late elections. Buchanan realized this, and in his opening message advised a moderate increase of tariff duties, chiefly for the sake of relieving the wants of the treasury. Secretary Cobb with aching heart admitted in his report the prospect of such a change. A duty on iron was to be the concession for Pennsylvania's especial benefit; but Southern members of the House committee of ways and means were inflexibly opposed to the change, as well as the pro-slavery Senate. That committee could agree upon no tariff bill, and as time slipped away it looked as if this Congress would expire leaving the government without the means of meeting its present deficiency. On the last day the President in a special message made

^{1859,} ^{March 3} a strenuous appeal to the two Houses to save the public credit from dishonor.* A strange sequel this, of those other efforts which the administration had been pushing all winter, for buying up foreign islands and

* Special message, March 3, 1859.

carrying on a roving war. The situation, in a party sense, was critical, for if a new Congress should convene at once, several Democratic States would not be represented in it. Besides their variance on the tariff, the present Senate and House were seriously at loggerheads on the point of originating revenue bills. At the last moment the latter branch adopted an amendment* which the former had made to one of the appropriation bills, permitting treasury notes for \$20,000,000, which covered the existing deficiency, to be reissued.† The peril of open insolvency was thus tided over; but while the two wings were wrangling over their prerogative on the post-office appropriation, Congress breathed its last breath.

Republicans had been struggling to increase the majority of free States in the Union. The present Congress began with sixteen free to fifteen slave States, and though Kansas was still left out, it ended with eighteen to fifteen. Minnesota was admitted in the first session, distant Oregon in the second, the latter State being notoriously much less populous than Kansas, which tarried until its beard was grown.‡ What commended Oregon to favor was the hope that she would train in the Democratic column; yet, after all, that hope proved treacherous. The prospect of regaining slavery's equilibrium waned constantly, for free labor was immeasurably superior in procreative energies.§

* By 94 to 83.

† Act March 3, 1859, c. 82.

‡ The full "representative population" which Kansas was required to furnish as a penalty for refusing the Lecompton yoke, was 93,340. Oregon's population under the census of 1860 was 52,465.

§ Minnesota's act of admission was May 4, 1858, c. 31; that of Oregon was Feb. 14, 1859, c. 33. The people of Minnesota, under an enabling act passed in 1857, had framed a constitution which the people adopted in October of that year. There was a quarrel and party schism in the convention of July at St. Paul, but adoption cured the irregularities. Oregon appears to have been admitted without a previous enabling act, the people adopting their constitution, and then applying to Congress for admission. Both constitutions were anti-slavery, but that of Oregon forbade negroes to settle there.

SECTION II.

PERIOD OF THIRTY-SIXTH CONGRESS.

MARCH 4, 1859 — MARCH 4, 1861.

CHANGES were now foreshown in the political sky. Sam Houston, uncouth,* but strongly accentuated with that Jacksonian love of the Union which pandered much too eagerly to its glory, left the senatorial life to become Governor of Texas, and aspire vainly in his venerable age to amalgamate the sections. Stephens, of the House, another Southerner, retired at the same time, for his own ease and pleasure, — a leader and a would-be Unionist, of a more interesting but more elusive type. This frail man, as he looked, had vital powers to drain through two more epochs; generous and philosophizing through all caprices, but, like Brutus, borne fatally on with events to take the current which his heart and mind taught him would be disastrous. His last efforts, before returning home, were to heal up the Douglas breach in his party; but he could avail nothing with the President and administration, and left the Federal city persuaded that the Union would soon be sundered.†

On the 8th of March died Brown, the Postmaster-General, a man of popularity. Joseph Holt of Kentucky, the Commissioner of Patents, was promoted to his place. Stern-faced, attentive to business, and inflexibly attached to the Union, the new Cabinet officer showed little congeniality with his Southern colleagues in the Cabinet, but

* Corwin describes him in the Senate with a red handkerchief hanging down two feet from his rear pocket, and looking like "the devil with a yard of brimstone on fire in his rear." 2 *Coleman's Crittenden*, 38.

† "I suppose you think of coming back as a Senator," said a personal friend to the Georgian, as the latter prepared to depart from the scenes where he had been so prominent. "No," answered Stephens, sadly, "I never expect to see Washington again, unless I am brought here as a prisoner of war." And this foreboding was fulfilled. *Johnston's Stephens*, 347, 348.

his pruining economies at once commended his selection. The failure of the Post-office appropriation bill left the administration in a dilemma; but after much discussion it was agreed that no extra session should be called, the new Postmaster-General undertaking by prudent retrenchment to carry on the business of his department until December.

Another important appointment of this month was that of Robert McLane, of Maryland, as Minister to Mexico with full discretionary powers, whose purport will appear hereafter. Few missions of real concern were bestowed by this administration. William B. Reed, of Pennsylvania, arranged our creditable treaty with China. William Preston, of Kentucky, had been lately appointed to Spain, on the hopeless chase for Cuba. At London and at Paris Dallas and John Y. Mason kept each to the post where President Pierce had placed him. The Democracy of the Supreme Bench had been lately rounded off by the elevation of Nathan Clifford of Maine, in place of Webster's friend, Benjamin R. Curtis, who had resigned shortly after the Dred Scott decision.

For more than seven months all was tranquil on the bosom of the broad republic. But the political drift was watched with the deepest interest as the machinery of the popular will clicked out its registration. The spring harvest in New England was reaped by the Republicans; New Hampshire, thrifty Connecticut, and Rhode Island giving strong adhesion to their cause. Late March-May. in May Virginia elected a governor for four years, the people taking a hand, since 1851, in a choice which previously had devolved upon the Legislature; and John Letcher, who ranked as an independent Democrat, was chosen by fifty-five hundred majority, with a legislature largely of the same faith in both branches. August and August-September. September brought Democratic victories in Kentucky and Tennessee to the perch of the State ticket, though the opposition, or Southern Americans, gained a few members of the next House here and in North Caro-

lina. In California, as of course in Alabama and Arkansas, the Democrats won by large majorities. Reckoning beforehand the straggling districts in Georgia, Louisiana, and Maryland which the solid Democrats could not capture, it was reasonably sure before the great elections of October and November that the next national House would pass into the full control of neither of the two leading parties, but the balance of power would be in the hands of the opposition members, still styled American, who were elected from the South.*

Of the two new States, Minnesota gave its preference for the popular branch to the Republicans; Oregon to the Democrats; but each shared the Senate seats between the two parties. Kansas, the repulsed sister, took earnest steps to bring her population up to the requisite figures, and apply again for admission. Left at length to manage and control their own affairs without external pressure, the majority here maintained the supremacy of freedom by continuing their hold upon the territorial legislature and legitimate machine, leaving the Topeka Constitution and short-cut movement to disappear. Denver had already

1858. laid down the governorship, in the fall of 1858,

— Samuel Medary, of Ohio, succeeding him, and pursuing the same fair course of leaving local sovereignty as far as possible to work out its own course. A sort of guerilla warfare, known as “jay-hawking” continued still in some remote parts of the territory, but the better days of peace and prosperity had now arrived. Robinson, the leader of the Free-State party, co-operated with Buchanan’s governors in restoring order and tranquillity. The territorial legislature of 1858 had tried its hand in ordering another convention; but Denver set his foot upon the project, and a good constitution framed prematurely at Leavenworth was rejected at the polls. A new terri-

1859. trial legislature met in Lawrence in the first month of 1859. It overhauled the statutes,—repealing in bulk the brutal code of 1855, which was publicly burnt

* Tribune Almanac.

in the streets ; published a general amnesty for political offences, and ordered the sense of the people to be taken upon calling a new constitutional convention. The vote cast in March was favorable by more than three to one ;* and under the Governor's proclamation delegates were chosen and the convention met on the 5th of July at Wyandotte. The membership of this convention consisted largely of new men, and in the choice of delegates the party names, Republican and Democrat, were used for the first time. Less radical than the Leavenworth Constitution, that of Wyandotte followed the Topeka instrument in restricting the suffrage to "white male persons," but slavery of course was forbidden. On the 4th of October this fourth of organic charters which had been offered to the inhabitants, under one sanction or another, was ratified by a large popular majority.† Charles Robinson was chosen governor in December, and bleeding Kansas stood erect a State in all respects except for the final recognition of Congress.‡

The registration of the people's will went steadily on. Ohio chose in October the second of its Republican governors, in William Dennison, brimming up his pluriarity to thirteen thousand ; and with a legislature ^{October-} ^{November} Republican in both branches, promised to send to the national Senate, where he had served in former days, the late Executive of two terms, Salmon P. Chase, who now left office with a reputation for wisdom, dignity, and upright conduct in affairs second to that of no statesman of his times. In face of a defalcation revealed in the treasury and traceable to a former rule, he had brought up the finances of the State to an admirable point and shown rare traits as an economist. The October elections in Iowa and Minnesota were carried by the Republicans. In Pennsylvania, too, though opposition ranks were in

* The vote stood 5306 to 1425.

† This majority was nearly 4900 in a total vote of 15,951.

‡ Newspapers ; Spring's *Kansas*, cs. 11, 12.

some disorder, Buchanan's party met humiliation. Massachusetts re-elected its "iron man" with strong heartiness. New Jersey chose an "opposition" or Republican governor by a small majority. New York's contest, which was closely watched by the country, though the offices at stake were inferior ones, favored on the whole the party of moral ideas. Americans, making here no separate nominations, but adopting a State ticket which embraced five Republican and four Democratic names, showed their weight as a "balance of power" party; thus gaining three places for the Democrats by trifling averages, while Republicans won all the rest of the offices and the legislature besides.*

Civic elections in some quarters of the Union were characterized by riot and disturbance. Organized bands of ruffians who belonged to the dominant party of Union Americans—"plug-uglies" as they were called—surrounded the polling booths in Baltimore and kept unfriendly voters away, killing and maiming many with their revolvers. Washington, at its late charter elections had more than once been browbeaten by these drunken and brutal gangs from the neighboring city. In New Orleans in 1858 a vigilance committee forced a notorious mayor to resign, but the new election which followed went against them. "How long," asked honest citizens of the most populous American municipality, "shall crime and rowdyism lead the destinies of the country?" Here Fernando Wood, once so hopeful a reformer, went back to his untidy constituency of roughs, "dead rabbits" and the slum of Five Points. The Whig legislature of 1857,

^{1857.} despairing of local self-government, had consolidated New York City and Brooklyn, with the outlying towns, into a metropolitan board of police, of which the mayors were *ex-officio* members, while the State maintained control. Mayor Wood organized a rebellion against this act; between two sets of police, dust and garbage gathered in the streets, and the militia had to be called out to quell disturbances. When the Court

* Tribune Almanac.

of Appeals rendered its decision that the metropolitan police bill was constitutional and valid, the mayor disbanded his police so suddenly that the city was left, on the eve of our independence holiday, with less than half its usual force, and the "dead rabbits" came out, like the rats of Hamelin, to plunder and commit outrage. Again had the military arm to be invoked for two days to keep order; other complications came later; nor was it until after a carnival of crime, followed by an exciting canvass in which merchants, property-holders, and the Wall Street bankers rallied to the side of law and order, that Wood was defeated at the polls and sent for a short time into retirement. His successor, though a decent and well-intentioned man, was a Democrat, swayed by the secret and sinister influences of Tammany; and Wood, squirming himself once more into party influence, came back two years later into his place again. For the Republicans put up a party candidate, and Tammany a rich and respectable Democrat, and Wood, whose popularity with the great unwashed had not abated, was chosen in triumph over his divided foes. Thus for the public health will a strong tide sometimes wash out the sties and kennels of civic corruption; but the putrid mass soon gathers and festers again, because there is no fixed system of sewerage. Citizens disposed to good government are too quickly disheartened, or too much absorbed in private gain, or too easily led to ingratiate themselves with power, to keep up the fight against vicious tendencies. The saving strength of a people with these artificial environments is found only in a great crisis.

The political signs we have recounted were not lost upon the administration and the set in power. The venerable Cass in one of his fits of tremor is reported to have said, after hearing of the New York State election: "I have witnessed the beginning of this government, and I sometimes think I may witness its end."*

* Current newspapers.

In some of the close States the canvass had been conducted with great virulence; in California, for instance, where Broderick, the stone-cutter's son, rebuked by his legislature for lending a hand against Lecompton, had been betrayed into a political duel which was fought with six-shooters, and was shot through the lungs at the first fire,—the first of our Senators with Bowery antecedents, and the first to die such a death, and yet withal a man of merit.

Presidential movements were already in progress. The early national convention of the Democrats had been set already for Charleston, as though that party, already infatuated with the South, were descending into the very hot-bed of secession and aristocratic obduracy. The heated wrangle of the New York "hards" and "softs" in their recent State convention was one of many indications that this next national gathering would split up in irreconcilable feud.

Three Southern speeches had been promulgated during the anxious summer, by three Southern leaders of different types. Stephens of Georgia, Rhett of South Carolina, and Jefferson Davis were the several speakers: the first, to his constituents on the occasion of his retirement from Congress; the second, on the celebration day of our independence; the third, before the Democratic State convention at Jackson. Rhett, who had long since left the Senate and public life, uttered rank secession; and for years he had prophesied and dissolved the Union to the best of his ability. Stephens spoke as one whose interests still centred in the Union; Davis, as a Unionist upon condition. "If a President," said the latter, "should be elected on the platform of Seward's Rochester speech, then let the Union be dissolved."

The scheme of national policy which the two greater of these orators advanced laid stress upon the newly discovered right which Southern slaveholders possessed, to settle with their human property in the territories, protected by the Constitution on a platform of equal rights. In the triumph of such a principle the slavery exclusion doctrine of

Rufus King, the Missouri compromise doctrine, and the Texas doctrine had all been abandoned. But non-intervention, aided by the Dred Scott decision, did not go far enough. (1) They wished Congress to enact a slave code, to give positive protection to slave property in the public domain while the territorial condition lasted. (2) And more than this, since the natural increase of the African stock was not enough for the extension and preservation of Southern institutions, it was desirable to repeal the act of Congress which made the African slave trade piracy; that whole subject belonging more properly to the discretion of the several States. (3) External expansion was the last great principle for the South to carry out; Central America and Mexico were open to our acquisition, and Cuba most of all. Stephens was not in favor of paying Spain much for her island; but if Cuba wished to come into the Union, he was for repealing the neutrality laws so as to give our people a chance to help her. Davis kept a clear eye upon contingencies; he viewed the acquisition of such a prize as advantageous to the whole Union if the Union continued, and of still greater advantage to the South in the event of a new confederacy.*

These three new points of Democratic departure, all aggressive, might well alarm the friends of freedom. Slaveholding philosophy was making its votaries mad. To Stephens's mind it seemed that slavery was stronger to-day than ever before. And Davis solved by ethnology the whole relation of the weaker races; negroes, he affirmed, had not here nor in Liberia shown capacity for self-governing, and hence the good of society required that they should be kept in their normal condition of servitude. Davis was a public leader whom Stephens himself, feeble by comparison in executive force, deferred to. He was unquestionably the foremost man of the far South at the present day; and since Quitman's death his command could not be disputed. Energy, boldness, and consummate weight of character had given him a national reputation and influ-

* See current newspapers which published these speeches.

ence ; his style of speech was trenchant and analytical, with an occasional arrogance which betrayed the training of a soldier and plantation lord, as well as his keen consciousness of mental superiority. This thin, pale, polished, and intellectual-looking son of Mississippi, of passive demeanor and habitual courtesy sat in the national Congress among commonplace, blustering, and bibulous colleagues, almost the only man left there of that higher grade of Southern gentlemen which was once so common in public life. To the projects of policy which Davis now brought forward the opinion of the cotton States was already moving. Efforts, for instance, were already there in progress to reopen the African slave trade,—the first step being to denationalize the crime. And truly if slave traffic were morally right, and the local supply insufficient, why was not the argument a good one ? The Southern mind was undergoing a change on this question. Public men of the old school, like Houston and Wise, might speak with abhorrence of the proposal, but the great Jefferson himself was out of date, and the act to which he had placed his signature no longer sacred.

A Southern commercial convention which met in Vicksburg resolved by nearly three to one that all laws, State or Federal, which prohibited the African slave trade ought to be abolished. Cargoes of slaves had been landed recently in Savannah and other ports ; but juries would not convict, and courts themselves inclined to quash the prosecution. No harm so great had the Dred Scott decision done, and the example of the highest tribunal in the land, as in fostering the Southern belief that race superiority involved race subjection,—that they who have a giant's strength must use it as a giant. Filibustering, in this false light, was thus beheld as a civilizing mission which government should heartily assist. A new secret association was formed this year, which adopted the old methods and ideas of the Know Nothing lodges and met in August at White Sulphur Springs ; "Knights of the Golden Circle" was the name of the order, and its prime object was to extend slavery's area by conquering Spanish America. This le-

gion was suspected of disunion ends, which there is little doubt that it held in reserve. For the idea was by many indulged and inculcated in our gulf region that the election of a "Black Republican" fanatic like Seward to the Presidency should be the signal for secession.

What, then, was likely to transpire at the Charleston convention? Buchanan, in an open letter, announced his final determination not to be a candidate for re-election. Douglas's position, as Southern politics were tending, was of much more consequence to define. If, as he now wrote in response to inquiries, the Democratic party should determine to adhere to the Cincinnati platform and the principles of the Kansas-Nebraska act, his friends might present his name. But if, in lieu of time-honored principles which the people had sanctioned, "the convention shall interpolate into the creed of the party such new issues as the revival of the African slave trade or a Congressional slave code for the territories, or the doctrine that the Constitution of the United States either establishes or prohibits slavery in the territories beyond the power of the people legally to control it as other property, it is due to candor to say that in such an event I could not accept the nomination if tendered to me." In a magazine article this same summer the Illinois senator put into literary form his argument for "popular sovereignty," with its local rights, privileges, and immunities, hazily qualified by "the Constitution of the United States."*

Douglas was the idol still of a large fraction of his party, and dear most of all to a Northern wing which felt that slavery drove its spurs too deep. His letter and magazine article set forth his own platform, which, unfortunately for his ambition, required him to repel all earnestness for national results, pro-slavery or anti-slavery, and to glorify instead blind evolution. Republicanism was earnest; and equally so were the Southern masters, who now parted company wholly and

* 19 Harper's Magazine, 519.

forever with their once serviceable ally. Unfriendly squatter legislation, which might nullify what they now regarded as their constitutional right to own slaves in national territory, was a nauseating dose; and a dogma that whispered one thing and worked out the opposite, was as execrable as the demagogue who invented it for his advancement. Douglas was still with the ardent South on foreign conquests,—he would annex Cuba by force, and he applauded the filibuster Walker; and for that reason a few, like Stephens and Soulè, still patronized him. But Davis, Slidell, Toombs, Cobb, and the whole set that ruled in administration circles now repudiated and defied him; they believed that he acted not from conscience but policy. With the pugilistic and prodigious force of his intellect, his quickness of attack and indomitable pluck, Douglas was certainly a formidable figure for a Presidential campaign. But his rollicking freedom with "the boys," his Zouave tactics, his brass, his dare-devil qualities, repelled Southern gentlemen the more, now that he parted from their service, while old-fashioned Democrats of a conservative type, like Guthrie and Hunter, had never believed in him. Besides, the South had fair reason for wishing the next honors of the party; for the North had occupied the Presidential chair ever since Taylor died in 1850.

Unconsciously this Union was nearing a great crisis, which would melt up infallibly all national prepossessions on the subject of domestic systems of labor, and remit the existing era to the irrevocable past. Yet so admirable had been the general training and influence of our solid institutions, so deeply loyal and affectionate to the cause of national unity had become the great mass of our American people, that an unseen force bore the Constitution and the vast Confederacy bravely and buoyantly through a strife which demolished violently the whole false fabric of race oppression that fifteen States had constructed society upon. Three great principles permeated the chief range of this Union in all matters, public and private: (1) submission to the law, at the same time that variance of

the law with Divine injunction lent a stimulus towards changing it; (2) acquiescence in the decision of a majority, whether formally or informally prescribed; (3) compliance with the homely and unwritten maxim of common life,—first come, first served. All this diminished the wrangle for precedence; and the silent spread of the rule last mentioned—though woman was much privileged still in applying it—attested our Democratic habit very strongly.

Such maxims did not prevent an individual who respected them from exerting an immense leverage for certain purposes,—a leverage much the greater, as might often happen, because of the organized force which law or the majority thus confided to his hands. From selfish and monopolizing tendencies, for wealth more especially, society is never free; but a jealous and virtuous people will check and counteract them. One of the most remarkable forces in American society was spontaneity; the subscription list, the journalistic appeal, or the eloquence of a public meeting, opened the private purse and brought hosts of willing citizens to the front, who were moved by generous compassion or the sense of a common danger. This spirit of voluntary sacrifice and co-operation was strongly illustrated in both opposing sections at the outbreak of the civil war.

The American, though immersed in the pursuit of riches, was learning to relish keenly the luxuries and refinement which wealth brings in its train. In these days he travelled much and came in contact with the Europeans of many countries. He did not blindly imitate, but adapted the ideas of all lands to suit a liberal taste. No insular prejudices confined him to particular dishes; but whatever was found relishing in English, French, or German cookery he applied to his own palate, cherishing a taste for profusion which the abundant variety and excellence of our soil products could readily gratify. In cereals, fruits, and vegetables, the best resources of the temperate zone were his own; oysters, game from the

far West, and fish as delicious as was ever jerked from brook or ocean ministered to his appetite. His hotels, like his steamboat palaces, becoming each later one more gilded and gorgeous than the last,—for rivalry and the spirit of innovation forbade his settling in quiet ruts and leaving things to grow venerable,—were miracles of accommodation;* while his railway trains were better fitted for popular travel than those of any other country in the world. Horse railways could be watched in New York city from the Astor House windows the first year of Pierce's presidency; since which time Boston and others of our richer municipalities had permitted them. Aerial locomotion had not been untried; for this very summer La Mountain made his experimental voyage from St. Louis to the Atlantic seaboard in his "air ship," or mammoth balloon; which, after dipping accidentally into Lake Ontario, landed in a tree on the neighboring shore, and on a second trip upset the repentant navigator in the great Canadian wilderness, a hundred and fifty miles north of Ottawa, where he wandered four days without food until providentially rescued. A great danger of such journeying was in aerial currents, which drove one from his course.

Vulcanized rubber and the sewing-machine were among the thousand new American discoveries applied to the general comfort. Pennsylvania, luckiest of commonwealths in amassing fortunes, struck coal oil as the sperm disappeared, and illumined the world anew. Kane and other daring souls pursued their Arctic explorations, incited by the search for the bones of the British Sir John Franklin. College students put new zest into boating and athletics, moved by the graphic scenes of English life depicted in "School Days at Rugby." The turf had its patrons, too, though to transplant the fashionable glories of the Epsom or Derby was for the present hopeless. Americans of the North were busy, their idlers were chiefly of the loafing

* "An American hotel," wrote William Chambers, in 1853, "is not a house, it is a town."

and dissipated set, and hence they performed the baser recreations by deputy. John Morrissey, as the champion of the United States, pommelled Heenan, the "Benicia Boy," in 1858. The French Houdin, in 1859, undismayed by the fate of Sam Patch, walked across Niagara River, at a short distance below the cataract, on a tight rope. Paul Morphy, our famous chess-player, was one of the international celebrities who catered to our entertainment, among a long list of singers, musicians, actresses, authors, and light professionals, from Jenny Lind, Sontag, Thackeray, and the tragic Rachel, down to the piquant and scandal-breeding Lola Montes. Jullien, the conductor, with his airy bâton and hurricane symphonies, had served his turn; orchestras of imported talent mingled in their more popular selections occasional bits of classical music; and against the prudish protests of older men and women, who danced square dances only, the long "German" was coming into fashion among the youngsters of society. The best French and Italian operas were patronized by the cream of our chief cities, and among the latest and most admired of them were *Trovatore*, *Traviata*, and *Martha*. The American stage was enlarging its influence, and among native actors the ranting Forrest, and Booth the younger, whose melancholy Dane was his own natural image, stood highest in popular estimation. Audiences wept at Miss Heron's impersonation of "*Camille*," but confessed that the play was like a peep at Satan.

American literature had reached a golden pinnacle; serene, as it looked, above the angry waves which lashed our most dangerous headland. Cooper and Prescott were in their graves; the genial Irving died this year; but Bancroft and Motley were still among the historians; Hawthorne, doubtful of his country's fate, was extending his picturesque studies abroad; and of poets, Bryant, Longfellow, Holmes, Lowell, and Whittier were a host for any age, though the first-named had laid aside his lyre, and the anti-slavery effusions of the last offended good breeding. Everett and Ticknor were figures in cultured circles,—the former, by his lecture upon "George Wash-

ington" and descriptive papers printed in the well-paid columns of the "New York Ledger," aiding the ladies of the Union to purchase Mount Vernon for a national memorial.

Lyceum committees still arranged their lecture courses for the long winter evenings; and star lecturers, of whom the great majority were literary writers, politicians, and men of the learned professions, roamed through the North and West, educating from the platform, and satisfying the rural craving to look upon the owners of familiar names. Among celebrities who increased their incomes in this way were Wendell Phillips, the philosophical Emerson, and preachers of renown like Chapin and Henry Ward Beecher. The physical strain of this work was very great, involving long winter journeys by incommodious trains which missed their connections, and lonely breakfasts at unseasonable hours. There were no more living orators like Webster; none who could fan into a blaze the idolatrous love of an undivided country. Orators on this theme betrayed either despondency or quaking boldness. Choate, who now passed into the shades, had deplored in one of his latest orations the modern rise of little politicians, little preachers, and little men; but his own failure to appreciate the dawning age caused the misconception. Conservatism, with its horizon of narrow diameter, was losing its hold upon our society; radical ideas were coming fast into fashion. As in religious thought the new theories of science made rapid inroad, and men feared not to discuss glaciers, vestiges of creation, and the plurality of worlds, so in politics there was a growing regard felt for men who spoke and acted boldly.

The South, with ampler leisure and a love of the open air, found less employment for the enginery of mental culture, and, to tell the truth, looked rather disdainfully upon it. This section, to match the galaxy of Northern bards and writers of voluminous fiction, had no literary author to name but William Gilmore Simms; its only living authority upon statistics and political economy was "De Bow's Review;" its sons were educated in Northern schools and colleges; and our national literature, like the

books into which the brains of authorship entered, was of Northern manufacture. A consciousness of this intellectual dependence, and jealousy that anti-slavery ideas should thus get rife, bred a new project at this time of a Southern university, where slaveholders' sons should be nurtured in studies appropriate to a master race. But in politics and the military profession the South bore great sons, as she had always done, being strong in the ascendancy which is gained by personal contact ; and among her most impassioned orators, in these years, besides the statesmen we have followed in active service, was William L. Yancey, of Alabama, whose silvery eloquence for conquest and race supremacy enchained many an audience.

It was just after the October elections that a cry of horror was heard through the land. Virginia, the mother of States, was invaded by a Northern horde ; the national arsenal seized at Harper's Ferry ; slavery assaulted on soil which the Federal Constitution held sacred ; and a servile war inaugurated, that blacks might ravish, despoil, and murder. In the agitated condition of the Southern mind the danger was easily exaggerated ; and at the first alarm it seemed as if the whole abolition army above the border, and meddlesome civilization itself, were in active motion to start the "irrepressible conflict." This panic subsided when the self-imprisoned invaders were secured with chains or shot dead, and the lanterns of investigation, prying from top to bottom and from corner to corner, revealed nothing more serious than a foolish and crack-brained plot ; and the invading cohorts of "Black Republican" cut-throats and incendiaries dwindled down to a little band of twenty-two men, armed with rifles, pistols, and pikes,—a family party for the most part, with a few companions, white and black,—all headed by that obscure patriarch and self-appointed scourge of the Almighty, old John Brown.

Had this sporadic and nonsensical movement been calmly and considerately viewed by those against whom it was directed, had the pitiful and deluded assailants

been treated with the decent magnanimity for which so good an opportunity was afforded, John Brown's raid would have passed out of the public mind, like any other nine-days' wonder, and been forgotten. No negro uprising followed, nor the shadow of a servile war; the negro continued as docile, the Constitution as stringent in its protection of slave property as slavery could ever have expected. But the slave master showed on this occasion his innate tyranny and cruelty towards an adversary, by something of that gloating vengeance which our English code once inflicted when it quartered and disembowelled political traitors; and had the ill-calculating liberator dared the laws in one of the lower cotton States, instead of mild Virginia, there is little doubt that he would have been much more ignominiously dealt with. John Brown was arrested, tried, and convicted in hot haste; he was strung up on the gallows-tree; and meeting death like a gallant man who believes his cause to be right, he became a martyr, and consequently an inspiration and a figure in history.

Of Pilgrim pedigree and revolutionary fighting stock, our grim hero was one of those stern-faced sons of righteousness who read their Bible, rear great families of sons and daughters,* and fight poverty's privations handicapped, with every chance of worldly success against them. John Brown's very name, rugged and familiar on the tongue, claims kin for him with a host of common people of English blood. Failing in one means of livelihood after another, he settled with his family on a farm among the lonely Adirondacks, where, under the countenance of that rich philanthropist, Gerrit Smith, he managed a scheme for the amelioration of free blacks, which, like most others to which he laid his unlucky hand, turned out badly. Kansas and the struggle to found a free State sent four of his children westward among the first settlers. The father followed with other sons in 1856, not as a peaceable

* He had two wives (the latter of whom survived him), and nineteen children. Stearns's John Brown.

farmer, but to put cold lead into the border ruffians. Brown's inflexible temper and fierceness by this time made him an unsafe man for those pioneer surroundings; his range of vision was necessarily narrow; and, already an honest hater of slavery, whose only patrons were avowed abolitionists, he was almost crazed in mind by the sufferings which his sons were forced to undergo while the prairie turbulence was at its height. The old man was a thorn to Robinson and the other leaders of the free-State party, whose methods were politic, and who aimed to carry their point. He swung "the sword of the Lord and Gideon;" he conceived bloody plans with cunning reticence, and executed them with stolid disregard of the general opinion. His night massacre near Pottawatomie, where with his little band he pulled unoffending people out of their beds and put them to death because they were slaveholders, was the one atrocity of 1856 on freedom's side which could never be expiated. Winning from this exploit the sobriquet of "Ossawatomie Brown," the grim warrior was next winter at the East, describing with deep feeling the woes which his children had undergone, wounded, maimed, or marched in chains under a burning sun. He collected such pitiful sums as he could from the philanthropic, secretive of his real purpose, and reappeared in Kansas just as the better era was opening, there to sojourn for about a year, disturbing the territorial peace for the last time by making a foray across the Missouri line and stampeding some slaves, after killing a slaveholder who resisted him.*

Brown's visit to the East had developed an undisclosed purpose to carry the war into Africa, and, joining the slaves to his standard, to crush slavery out in the Southern States, reckless of all laws but that of divine retribution.†

* Cf. F. P. Stearns's *John Brown*, and Von Holst's essay (*ib.*), and *26 Century*, 411.

† Brown's return to Kansas was probably a feint, or a temporary abandonment of his immense plans, which a man to whom he had confided them is said to have betrayed. The success of his Missouri raid seems to have encouraged him to resume the enterprise.

Though of decided character, his mind had been strangely unstrung by the murderous scenes in Kansas in which he had borne a part. While determination to retaliate ran deep within him, we must think his faculties so strained and distorted as to lose all just sense of the adequacy of means to his ends. Insanity ran in Brown's family, and one of his sons in Kansas was a victim of the malady. Yet monomaniacs may plot most cunningly; their folly develops more properly at the stage of action. What

1859, moonlight madness do we see in that constitution
April 8. drawn up and read to confederates over the Canadian border, wherein John Brown announces the provisional government of the United States which he intends, as the new Cromwell, to establish.* And what quin-

October sence of nonsense is curtained in that night de-
16-18. scent of scarcely twenty confederates upon Harper's Ferry from the neighboring heights of Maryland, where the Browns, father and sons, under the equally plebeian name of Smith, had rented their small farm the past summer, and stealthily collected weapons of war enough to deck out half a regiment, and hard cash amounting to two hundred and fifty dollars.† Any town of five thousand inhabitants ought, one would think, to have disarmed this amateur array; and any United States arsenal, in which were usually stored a hundred thousand stand of arms, should not, except in slack Virginia, have been left so utterly unguarded. John Brown makes the public property his own without firing a gun, and with sublimated zeal posts guards on the railway bridge near by, and makes a night arrest of two slave-owning farmers. So far does the Cromwell strategy sustain him; but when he stops the midnight train, and then suffers it, with chivalrous expressions, to go on its way towards Baltimore, why does he not scud like the fox to the near mountain

* This Utopian instrument purposed to reconstruct American society, and to bring in all residents of the country, whether slave or free, as members of the new political alliance.

† Stearns's John Brown (Von Holst), 122.

covert, instead of returning complacently with his pike-bearers into the premises of which he has robbed thirty millions of people, and barring the outer doors? With the nation's capital not so many miles away, and steam and telegraph spreading the alarm through the small hours of the night, it is not strange that morning overwhelms the whole crazy exploit. The loud halloo is raised, and the hounds of government are in full pursuit; regiments of Virginia militia hurry frantically to the scene to repel imaginary thousands, joined by fraternal corps from Maryland. Colonel Robert E. Lee, under government orders, reaches Harper's Ferry near midnight of the 17th with a detachment of United States marines. Great soldier that he is, he sees at once the easiness of his task, and applies simple means to simple ends. Stopping the desultory firing which has wasted human lives on either side and placed Brown's prisoners in jeopardy, he storms the un-provisioned arsenal, whose walls are a very trap, not with cannon, but with sledge-hammers and a heavy ladder used as a battering-ram; militia gaze on in admiration; the townspeople, recovering from their first fright, draw closer. The heavy doors yield to an assault after the Roman fashion, the marines rush in, and hoary John Brown is found on his knees half-dazed and severely wounded, two of his sons lying dead by his side. Out of the original nineteen who seized Harper's Ferry, two have escaped, ten are killed, and the remaining seven are easily handcuffed and sent to jail, the citizen prisoners being unharmed.*

But if Brown's invasion was wholly irrational, he paid the penalty like a true hero. The civil authorities of Virginia now took up the business; bills of indictment under a slave code were found against all the prisoners; and though each in due course felt the halter draw, ^{October-} Brown's trial, the most conspicuous, came first. ^{December.}

* While Brown's whole force numbered twenty-two, it is understood that only nineteen of them crossed the Potomac.

Prosecution was urged on by a hostile populace; the culprit's exhaustion from his wounds, which had not been mercifully dressed, made no point for a postponement, nor would the court even delay a few days for Northern counsel to arrive. The technical offence, to be sure, could not be disputed by testimony, but might not scruples have been raised to avert the severest penalty? Brown's aberrations seemed to clear away like summer clouds; he realized, all too late, the futility of exploits such as he had attempted; and his simple composure, and above all the genuineness of his character, won pity even from among his worst enemies. Virginia herself may have blushed to recall her once humane example; but times had changed, and with the rights of fifteen States to vindicate, Wise, her weather-vane of an Executive, who had streaks of better sense, marched and counter-marched his secure militia hither and thither, made cordons, planted his loaded cannon near the jail, and put an embargo for three days upon the railway trains to prevent a rescue.* Three slave States vied with one another for the privilege of furnishing the hempen cord. And having the previous day

taken leave of his wife and made his will, the
December 2. farmer of the Adirondacks on December the 2d was conducted from his cell to the fatal tree under a strong military escort, who were put through various cruel evolutions as he stood on the scaffold with his hands bound and his coffin near by. True to his tenets, Brown had refused to be shrived by a pro-slavery priest, or defended by pro-slavery counsel; he made no dying speech, but whenever in confinement he had declared himself, he said, as he undoubtedly felt, that slavery was a fanaticism, to which he was offered a bloody sacrifice. But he admitted that he had transgressed written laws, by whose forms he was rightly condemned, and even spoke generously, and too generously, of his treatment as a prisoner. He mounted

* It is still a matter of discussion whether Wise, who was much given to rhodomontade, made all this needless flourish from actual apprehension or for the sake of political capital. He was about to surrender his present stewardship, and hoped, perhaps, for something better.

the scaffold with a firm step, while the State troops manœuvred the public to a distance; his body swung quietly after the drop fell; and the extinct remains were delivered to his wife and friends to be taken North for burial. The Virginia negro was mute as death itself, but humble negro congregations in some remote free States met in prayer at the tolling of the bell on the day their intended benefactor was hanged.

John Brown was no Cæsar, no Cromwell, but a plain citizen of a free republic, whom distressing events drove into a fanaticism to execute purposes to which he was incompetent. He detested slavery, and that detestation led him to take up arms not only against slavery, but against that public opinion which was slowly formulating how best to eradicate it. Woe to the conquered. The North made no appeals for that clemency which slaveholders had alone to consider. Brown had not been lenient to masters, nor were masters bound to be lenient to him. And yet Brown was an enthusiast, and not a felon; the essence of his crime was unselfish. Like the French country maiden who went to Paris to plunge her dagger into a bloody ruler's heart, he meant to rescue good morals from the usurpation of human laws. Corday fulfilled her solitary plan because it was reasonable; John Brown failed in his plan because it was unreasonable; but both, as actors and martyrs, flashing upon the world's attention like new meteors, left examples of self-sacrifice, the one upon the guillotine, and the other upon the gallows, which a people could not refrain from exalting. The virgin damsel of grace and beauty, and the grim old man of sixty, stern and sanguinary, who led on his sons, take equal hold of posterity's imagination; of each one it has been said, by acute observers, that the immediate effect of their deeds was injurious to polities; and yet society in the long centuries is stronger for being thus taught that despotism over fellow-men is not safely hedged in by authority. Brown's stalwart, unique, and spectral figure led on, grotesque but terribly in earnest, the next time Virginia's soil was invaded,—not, however, for executing

any such unfeasible scheme of making the slaves their own avengers, but to apply the war powers of the nation against disloyal masters.*

Three days after this most important of the Harper's Ferry executions, and while John Brown's body December 5. was seeking a last resting-place among the mountains of New York, a new legislature convened, — the first Congress to organize in the new marble wings of the capitol extension, and the last Congress of the old regime. The armed attack and repulse in Virginia at the national arsenal — the fruit of Kansas outrage, in fact, even more than of abolition preaching — had not damaged the Republican cause in the late national elections. But the trepidation, North and South, over the tragedy and its latest incidents, showed that the gulf between Northern and Southern systems of self-government was widening immensely.

Recent accessions to the Senate showed the geographical bent of national politics. From Iowa, Michigan, New Jersey, and Rhode Island appeared new Republicans in Grimes, Bingham, Ten Eyck, and Anthony, each succeeding a Democrat. Southern Democrats, on the other hand, of aggressive type replaced partisans more moderate, or Americans of John Bell's pattern, — among them Powell, of Kentucky, Bragg, of North Carolina, and Nicholson, of Tennessee. Of the new Democrats from Texas, now that Houston had retired, Wigfall, a blatant disunionist, made sport for the galleries. Republicans gained steadily in this body, — movements in California and Oregon contributing to their further advantage, — and yet they were far behind a majority; for, out of sixty-six members, thirty-eight were on the Democratic side, and two were

* See Stearns's *John Brown* (with Von Holst's narrative) *passim*; and Sanborn, Redpath, and Hay and Nicolay, etc., commented upon, ib. And see 26 Century Magazine, 411. The stirring melody to the famous war-song, "John Brown's body" (first sung by a Massachusetts regiment on its march in 1861), was a Methodist tune, familiar a short time previous in religious gatherings.

Southern Americans. Crittenden, that noble relic, was one of these last, the party leaders most illustrious being, as in the previous term, James A. Bayard, Mason, Hunter, Toombs, Slidell, Benjamin, and Jefferson Davis, on the administration side; Douglas, whose attitude was peculiar; and, among Republicans, Hamlin, Fessenden, Hale, Collamer, Wilson and Wade, with Seward, whose respite of foreign travel was not finished until the new year opened. Sumner, after years of absence, took his seat once more with recruited health.

The House was a queer composite, with new men in unusual profusion. Of its two hundred and thirty-seven members, the Republicans could reckon a plurality, but, as long foreseen, they could not organize unaided.* Among them were the brothers Washburn, of Illinois, Maine, and Wisconsin, respectively; Colfax, of Indiana; Sherman, of Ohio; Dawes, and the flowery Burlingame, of Massachusetts; Morrill, of Vermont; Spinner and Fenton, of New York; Grow and Covode, of Pennsylvania. After years of absence came Thomas Corwin, too, and Thaddeus Stevens; and William Pennington, an ex-governor of New Jersey, took his seat for the first time, a man highly respected. Charles Francis Adams now entered the national lists a giant, and among other new Republicans destined for distinction were Rice and Train, of the same Massachusetts delegation, Windom, of Minnesota, and Roscoe Conkling, of New York. Upon the Democratic side were Sickles, of New York, whose hands were dyed with the blood of a domestic tragedy; Cox and Pendleton, of Ohio; English, of Indiana; Georgia's latest imperious Crawford; Barksdale and Lamar, of Mississippi; the fiery Keitt; and Vallandigham, who, though an Ohio man, was one of slavery's most clinging parasites. Logan and McCleernand, of the Illinois delegation, the former a novice in national

* See Tribune Almanac, which thus classifies: Republicans, 113; Administration Democrats, 93; Anti-Lecompton Democrats, 8; Southern Americans, 23. About one half the members had served in the former House, and the other half was made up of new men.

experience, were friends of Douglas; while among temperate men of a still more independent stripe were Hickman, of Pennsylvania; Henry Winter Davis, of Maryland; Gilmer and Vance, of North Carolina; and Maynard and Etheridge, of Tennessee. Thus constituted, this branch entered at once upon a long and excited struggle for

Speaker; John Sherman, of Ohio, who had won
1859, his first spurs on the Kansas investigating com-
December 5- mittee, polling the full Republican strength, but
1860, failing to attract stray independent votes or to

gain the consent of the House, as Banks had done, to a plurality choice. Though a man of strict probity, Sherman was not magnetic; and the fact that he, with others, had indorsed a book of the day, the "Impending Crisis," which was written by one Helper, of North Carolina, to show his fellow-slaveholders the evil of their system, and recommend deportation, as Jefferson and Madison had done, was bitterly used against him. Sherman withdrew manfully from the struggle on the 30th of January, after a cast of thirty-nine ballots, and in harmony with a party caucus transferred his whole strength to the unoffending Pennington, who on the forty-fourth ballot gained a majority by the change of a single American vote from New York. This was on the first day of February; and it was a singular circumstance that the chief dignity of Congress should have gone to one who entered its portals for the first time, with national and legislative experience both new to him. But amiability and non-committalism were now the cement of the sections. Pennington was respectfully treated and coached along in his duties; and, to please Pennsylvania and the Anti-Lecompton democracy, Forney, an important convert, was elected clerk, having well filled the office before.*

* Congressional Globe. In the contest for Speaker, Sherman had generally lacked from two to six votes of a majority, while the Democrats tried to unite the other elements upon some moderate Southern American, such as Gilmer, or a moderate Democrat like Bocock. After much casting about, Smith, of North Carolina, on the thirty-ninth trial was brought within three votes of a choice, the ballot standing 112 in

The House balloting had been greatly interrupted by debates which made Harper's Ferry the passionate theme. In the Senate, also, Mason, of Virginia, brought the subject up on the very first day of the session by a resolution of inquiry, which passed with unanimous consent. Mason, Davis, Fitch, Collamer, and Doolittle were chosen the investigating committee; but the hope entertained by many, of fastening the responsibility of John Brown's raid upon the leaders of the Republican party, was wholly disappointed. Most witnesses who were summoned gave their testimony freely, even though denying the committee's right to compel them; and it was soon seen that philanthropists who had befriended Brown's plans had been deceived concerning their true character. Slavery's crack-brained avenger, in a word, had been cunning enough to collect money, as though for the cause of free Kansas, and if he had confederates they were few and inconspicuous. This conclusion the Senate committee unanimously reached; reporting that there appeared no general conspiracy, but that John Brown reserved his plans closely to himself, even after he had begun to execute them.* Henceforth in Congress and

1859,
December-
1860.
June.

his favor against 106 for Sherman. This caused Sherman to withdraw his name. Pennington, having been substituted, led Smith on two or three ballots, and the latter withdrew. McClelland, who was the last candidate of the Democrats, received 85 votes to Pennington's 116 on the forty-fourth and last ballot. Briggs, of New York, changed to make the 117th vote requisite for Pennington's majority.

* Congressional Globe, 36th Congress, 1st session. The majority of the committee thought the Massachusetts Emigrant Society, which furnished rifles, culpable in not inquiring more carefully whether Brown spoke truthfully of the use he meant to make of them, but the minority (Republicans) dissented. Giddings, who had corresponded with Brown over his wrongs in Kansas, denied all complicity with Harper's Ferry. Buell's Giddings, 199. John A. Andrew, Dr. S. G. Howe, and others testified similarly. Senator Wilson, suspecting some mischievous intent on Brown's part, had warned friends at home not to trust him with weapons. Gerrit Smith was so much agitated by reports that he was a confederate, that he had to be put into an asylum. He denied afterwards all knowledge of Brown's plans, but his biographer doubts his word. Frothing-

through the session men of both sections were more outspoken and more violent upon the issue of slavery, inflamed by the campaign preparations which progressed outside. There was much Southern threat of disunion in case the Republicans should win the Presidential election, and the message of Governor Gist, of South Carolina, was of the same purport. A reckless stoppage of the wheels was the motive with some Southern representatives for hindering the choice of a Speaker. "Never permit the Federal government," urged Toombs in the Senate, "to pass into the traitorous hands of the Black Republican party;" and Clopton, Barksdale, and others of the House pitched speeches in the same strain. Republican members in return — confident that plots of negro insurrection could not be brought to their door — grew defiant in their tone and demeanor. Southern speakers could not easily extort from them any confession of a desire to uphold the institution. Lamar, in December, arraigning the absent Seward as one who looked with a longing eye for the day when no slave should stand upon American soil, thought to terrify by rebuking such an "atrocious sentiment." But Farnsworth, of Illinois, said, instantly and earnestly: "God grant that I, too, may see the day when the foot of a slave will not rest on this continent." A large fraction of the House applauded loudly; no voice on the Southern side was heard to remonstrate "treason;" though little Bonham, of South Carolina, squeaked out, "You'll never see it." *

With brawls and altercations still more violent, — with a harsh anti-slavery speech by Lovejoy, of Illinois, brother of the Alton victim, which slaveholding members interrupted

ham's Gerrit Smith. Frank B. Sanborn, through whose hands much of the money passed for Brown's enterprise, tells a story implicating Smith. Sanborn was arrested in Concord as a witness, and would have been brought to Washington to testify, but a Massachusetts judge gave him his liberty on a writ of *habeas corpus*. One refractory witness, Thaddeus Hyatt, was put in jail by the Senate committee, but released near the close of the session.

* Congressional Globe; newspapers.

by menaces of violence, and shouts of "liar!" and "perjurer!" — with challenges to fight, which the challenged party baffled by a choice of bowie-knives as the weapons, — with various proposals for riveting the free States more strongly to their constitutional obligations, — with ill-temper, bad blood, and the failure of useful and useless legislation alike, — the present long session is one towards which history can entertain no sentiment but the wish to bury it in oblivion. In the Senate, Davis brought forward his slave code for the territories, whose virus will soon be seen working in the platform of the Charleston convention. Douglas, once more a demagogue, quickly proposed to propitiate the South by a bill with arbitrary features for protecting States against invasion. This he prefaced with a speech which spiked John Brown as a specimen Republican, and reiterated in the old care-devil way that slavery was a matter of political economy, to go where the people wished it and not elsewhere. But Douglas did not make the friends he had hoped for; and Jefferson Davis met the overture by styling his scheme contemptuously "the new force bill."

Seward, who had returned from Europe, appeared in his accustomed seat in January. Southern Democrats gave him no greeting; but he presented before long the memorial of the Kansas legislature, which prayed for admission as a State. Democratic managers had contrived various plans for staving off this question, until, at least, the Presidential election was over; and Medary, the governor, vetoed meanwhile a bill of the new territorial legislature which proposed abolishing slavery. In the House on the 11th of April a bill passed for the admission of long suffering Kansas, under the Wyandotte Constitution, by a majority of 134 to 73, but the Senate on the 5th of June laid the bill aside.*

House and Senate, contrary in their attitude towards the administration, were contrary in action. The popular body, consistently opposed to barbarism's "twin relics," passed all in vain its own bill for suppressing polygamy

* Congressional Globe.

in Utah, while the Pacific railroad and tariff were postponed. "Land for the landless" had been a Republican motto, favoring the free farmer who settled on the public domain. The idea was to supplement the pre-emption principle by giving land in small quantity to the actual occupant who improved the soil, at a nominal price or without cost. This in other days had been a Democratic doctrine, and Benton was its father; but now the slave interest, which controlled that party, opposed all this, because it gave free colonization in national territories the advantage. For a third time, and by majorities steadily increasing, the House passed in March a bill of this kind.* Andrew Johnson, of the Senate, the plebeian Southerner who favored such plans against the great body of his section, reported a substitute bill which passed the Senate in May; † the House would not concur; but, after a long conference, an agreement was reached which the two Houses accepted.‡ But now came a veto message from the President; and upon the argument contained in it that Congress had no power to give away the public lands, Southern Senators rallied, and the measure was killed.§

Congress did not disperse on the 25th of June before the House had sent a broad shaft to quiver in the flank of the Executive. The Speaker had in March appointed a committee, upon the motion of Covode, of Pennsylvania, to investigate abuses which were alleged against the President and those of his immediate circle. This committee, with Covode himself at the head, proceeded with closed doors for nearly three months to hold high inquisition. Their object was not unpartisan, and they listened readily

* It passed, March 12, by 115 to 65, all the nays but one being from slave States.

† Johnson's substitute passed, May 10, by 44 to 8.

‡ June 19th the Senate bill was accepted, with slight amendments, by very large majorities.

§ The President returned the bill to the Senate June 23d. It failed of a two-thirds vote over the veto by 28 to 18. It was not until May 20, 1862, that a Republican Congress and administration enacted the "homestead" policy.

to whatever scandals, real or imaginary, disappointed applicants or decapitated officials might bring forward who chose to make a clean breast; and yet amid a crude mass of malicious matter, unassorted for want of time, there were facts disclosed which might well make an administration tremble. Twice did Buchanan submit to the House his solemn protest against an investigation so limitless in its scope and so derogatory to the dignity and independence of the Presidential office, but this the committee took as a sort of proclamation that the Executive power would be used to shield all who disobeyed a summons. Abuses were shown in Kansas: the letter from Buchanan's own pen, whose existence had been denied, which made to Robert J. Walker the treacherous promise that the Lecompton constitution would be submitted to the people; the subsidizing of public presses to support that bogus instrument; the tampering with doubtful men, and the crushing of honest men who could not be seduced. By the admission of the late public printer, over thirty thousand dollars had been spent by him to help carry the Lecompton and English bills through the preceding Congress; and so gross were the disclosures of that putrid pool, whose pernicious contributions for the party cause had to be made good by exorbitant charges against the government, that Senate and House, friends and foes, were forced to unite in breaking up the job-contract system, in which fat sinecures shared as partners, and giving means and machinery to the government for doing its own printing.* Executive favoritism, in various instances; the sucking of party profligates; the award of public contracts and patronage as a reward for campaign activity; and the bleeding of clerks and petty subordinates everywhere, by assessments upon their salaries to help carry the elections,—these were among the unfragrant exposures of the Covode committee, which adduced its evidence without formally proposing the impeachment or censure of any one.† Unfortunately for

* Joint Resolution, June 23, 1860.

† The House by a vote of two to one, near the close of the session, rebuked the Secretary of the Navy for partisan award of "live oak" and

Buchanan, his postmaster at New York fled a defaulter for many thousand dollars while this investigation went on. It was an age of theft and low political morals among men in power; nor, perhaps, with their own base ends to carry out, was the slave oligarchy unwilling it should be so.*

Suspicions of hugger-mugger and jobbery beclouded more and more the foreign relations, making one reason for non-accomplishment, in connection with that deeper absorption of the public interest over internal matters which shut out all other issues from the horizon. To take a final glance at foreign relations, Slidell had begun the session with another lunge at Cuba; the President's message, too, had given encouraging words; but the eyes of Congress were turned in other directions. With more energy, because the scheme was more practicable, had the Executive pressed the case against Mexico. Between Miramon, the reactionist, and Juarez, the constitutional President, who stood for popular rights, that unhappy republic was distracted. Robert M. McLane, whom our Executive had commissioned in the recess,† went, invested with discretionary authority to recognize the government

1859, of Juarez, which he exercised accordingly at Vera April. Cruz. Flattered by the display of credentials from a neighboring republic so powerful, the liberal chieftain, out of possession of his capital and the national December 14. archives, gave sanction to a "treaty of transit and commerce," which, for the payment of

other naval contracts and patronage, "with the sanction" of the President. Buchanan, in defence, explained his indorsement of letters to his secretary, such as the chief charge was founded upon, as a mere formal reference of routine business. 2 Curtis's Buchanan, 259.

* John A. Dix, leaving the calm of an honorable retreat, accepted the appointment of postmaster of New York to fill the vacancy, the Senate confirming his name without a reference. He found the assessment extortion upon the salaries of subordinates in full play, among other abuses, and undertook to break it up. 1 Dix's Memoirs, c. 8. See, further, Covode investigating committee report (printed as a bulky volume). The President is defended in 2 Curtis's Buchanan, c. 12.

† *Supra*, p. 423.

\$4,000,000, offered a transit route across Tehuantepec, and some other stated advantages, but in reality appeared a bait for forcible intervention, and the final absorption of all or part of Mexico into the American Union. The darker design, which Juarez still baffled, was shown by McLane's confidential instructions and the President's message of this Congress, while negotiations were in suspense, which urged the passage of a law authorizing him to establish military posts in Sonora and Chihuahua, and send to Mexico a military force sufficient to obtain "indemnity for the past and security for the future."* If we did not interfere to dismember, European powers would do so; for Mexico, said Buchanan, is "a wreck upon the ocean, drifting about as she is impelled by different factions." The treaty, when it arrived, was submitted to the Senate, but neither that nor the convention accompanying it was ever approved. Our public viewed the transaction as an attempt to annex more territory by stealth for slavery's benefit.^{1860,} ^{January 24.}†

Buchanan's messages of this Congress show him itching, moreover, to get a footing in the neighborhood of Central America and the isthmus, under cover of affording protection to the Panama and Nicaragua transit routes. These transit routes through other countries were flagrant with private jobbery, and government was well rid of taking further responsibility for them. Central America, moreover, was reaching to a better plane of peace and pros-

* Message of December 19, 1859.

† See various Executive messages of this Congress on the subject; Congressional Globe. The Senate in a special executive session in June postponed this treaty to December, when later disunion movements at the South must have rendered its adoption desperate. In 2 Curtis's Buchanan, c. 10, is found a defence of the proposed treaty without a very candid exposition of its subtle purpose. Had Buchanan's course been adopted, it is argued, the evil of Maximilian in Mexico would have been forestalled. But what would have been the effect upon this Union of a new plunder, on our part, from Mexican territory? And what sounder lesson was taught by the Maximilian invasion than that Mexicans by this time were determined to maintain their country's integrity against all foreign spoliation?

perity. Walker, the filibuster, returned in the summer of 1860, ^{June.} this year to renew the efforts in which the Knights of the Golden Circle aided him. He was overtaken and surrounded by a superior force, not far from Truxillo, on the Honduras coast; his followers ^{September} ^{30-October} were sent back to the United States, while he, ^{12.} upon a summary trial, was condemned and shot, perishing like other filibusters on this continent, before and since, even those of royal lineage.

In this last mournful episode, Great Britain's co-operation might be traced,—her influence, in junction with that more ambitious one of Louis Napoleon, quietly frustrating all our expansive schemes of manifest destiny in the lower corner of this continent. It is true, however,—and upon this the Buchanan administration may plume itself to the utmost,—that, yielding to the American interpretation of the Clayton-Bulwer treaty and the disquieting threats of the Monroe doctrine, she adjusted with the Central American States the complications of the Mosquito shore protectorate, and abandoned all pretensions as the United States had desired.* At Puget's Sound, too, on the Northwestern frontier, where trouble had arisen, she pacified this government courteously.† But the events of 1861 showed not long after that her government was sullen and disposed to exult in our humiliation.

Our narrative hastens on, absorbed for the remaining space with the record of internal strife. While Congress wrangled, the great political conventions met in turn, supplying torrents of talk to that body by way of direction or comment. Charleston, rising out of the sea from her low lagoon, like another Venice, was the seat of the national

^{1860,} Democratic convention which assembled on the ^{April.} 23d of April; and in this cradle of nullification,

* See 2 Curtis's Buchanan, c. 10.

† 2 Scott's Memoirs, 605. General Scott went to Oregon to adjust this difficulty.

this breeding-place of disunion and discontent, this home of the nineteenth-century doges who revered no statesman but Calhoun, the gathering feuds of the Democratic leaders reached a climax. Every State in the Union was represented in that convention, and three hundred and three delegates equalled the full number of the electoral college. But the cotton States had determined to lord it over the rest, and to press what many no doubt considered an ultimatum of national allegiance. The schism came in the adoption of a platform. Douglas was the strongest candidate among the delegates, and Northern Democrats, whose cubic capacity for slavery extension was nearly exhausted, preferred him. But the fire-eaters were inexorable,—the eloquent Yancey, who was among the delegates, commanding great influence on their side. Caleb Cushing, of Massachusetts, presided; the two-thirds rule for a nomination was carried; and the balloting was postponed to the platform. A bare majority of the platform committee reported, by 17 to 16, the slave-code dogmas which Jefferson Davis had propounded in his Mississippi speech,* and more lately in the Senate, that neither Congress nor a territorial legislature could impair the right of holding slaves in any territory of the United States, and that it was the duty, moreover, of Congress and the Federal government to protect that right. The minority or Douglas platform went as far as their candidate would go, by pledging to abide by whatever the Supreme Court might declare upon such points. This, in view of the Dred Scott case, should have been thought abject enough; and both reports reaffirmed the Cincinnati platform, called for the acquisition of Cuba, and, condemning all "personal liberty acts" as unconstitutional and revolutionary, upheld the faithful execution of the fugitive-slave act. By nearly a sectional division, the convention substituted the minority April 30. for the majority platform;† whereupon the Alabama delegation withdrew from the convention, and a majority of the delegates from Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana,

* *Supra*, p. 429.

† The vote was 165 to 138.

and South Carolina retired in like manner. A week having been thus spent, the remainder of the convention proceeded to ballot for a Presidential candidate, hampered by the two-thirds rule. Douglas far outdistanced all competitors; but fifty-seven ballots showing no choice, the convention adjourned to meet at Baltimore on the 18th of June.* The seceding delegates, meeting in a separate convention, elected James A. Bayard, of Delaware, their chairman, and, after adopting the majority platform of the committee, postponed further action to Richmond and the 10th of June. The antipathy of the cotton leaders to Douglas and his great principle was by this time unmistakable; from non-intervention, which had superseded the prohibition by Congress, they advanced imperiously to intervention on slavery's side; and in the first important comment on this Charleston split, both Davis and his colleague avowed in the Senate that they would rather see the Democratic party defeated than elect an advocate of "squatter sovereignty."

Hospitable Baltimore, the city of national monuments and the star-spangled banner, was the place of all others where well-bred slaveholders and Northerners might fan the embers of fraternal harmony. And here, after the

olden fashion, met a respectable "constitutional union convention," with delegates from both sections, to confer as brethren and gentlemen, and avoid the forbidden subject. Washington Hunt, of New York, was the chairman. John Bell, of Tennessee, led for Presidential nominee on the first ballot, and was unanimously chosen on the second; Edward Everett, by acclamation, was selected as his associate on the ticket. The platform was brief, characteristic, and by no means inappropriate; recognizing "no political principle other than the Constitution of the country, the union of the States, and the en-

* The whole number of votes after the Southern secession was 252. Douglas's vote being 152, he had not even two thirds of the number left, and the convention had required 202, or two thirds of the original delegates.

forcement of the laws." Such delusive generalities might have recalled the ship in the storm whose passengers met in the cabin and resolved "that it is fair weather;" yet this conservative body and its candidates proved of unquestionable benefit in the campaign which followed,—and in the South more especially, where none but a constitutional union movement, into which had melted the ephemeral force of Native Americanism, could counteract the manifest disunion tendencies of the black Democracy.

To Republicans, and the hopeful friends of national enlightenment, it seemed rank cowardice that their own fellow-citizens, who breathed a liberal atmosphere, should denounce freedom and slavery as equally deceptive and geographical. The Republican Convention met May 16th at Chicago; and a place more in contrast with the Palmetto city, more typical of another civilization, this Union could not have furnished. Charleston was aristocratic, dogmatic, disdainful of the plebeian mass, and disposed to brood over the past; Chicago was prosaic, and like its rectangular system of streets splendidly commonplace, boastful through vanity rather than pride, brimming with the ostentatious hospitality of sudden wealth; yet growing upon the margins which remained from its mortgages to Eastern capital, so as to seem more wealthy and expansive than it really was. This lake city without a past, but absorbed in the present and future, was the genuine product of free settlement and free institutions; the wide-awake commercial and distributing centre of the great Northwest, whose foible was the ambition to be the light of the world; prolific, and figuring its population so rapidly as to be already near the point of taking the crown from the old "queen of the West," —for Cincinnati, from her border position acquired a certain constraint and conservatism which her younger sister and rival never owned.

The breezy Northwest had been the first originator of freedom's Republican party; Illinois, a State of Jacksonian farmers who had voted constantly the Democratic

ticket, was important to win over; and Chicago had not procured the proud distinction of the present Republican convention on her remote slope without intending to drive a trade and coin direct advantage out of free-handed entertainment, as was customary with her citizens. The Republican party had been looking about anxiously for a winning candidate. Made up of such incongruous elements, and in some sense fortuitous ones, it had brought together, in spite of great leaders and great ideas, a host of small-fry agitators and fanatics, men whose range of vision was fixed upon one spot, or who had no range of vision at all. Hypocrites also were in plenty, as they always are when moral reforms are preached, and the little great, "fishing" (to apply the disdainful phrase of Everett) "with ever freshly baited hook in the turbid waters of ephemeral popularity." It was scarcely a step from these regenerators of a society which gave them no recognition to the ranting fanatics, the disunionists, and the foul instigators of free love, passional attraction, and individual sovereignty, who occupied the near background. Conservatism in all things was still the strong force of American society, and the name of radical was thought only less unendurable than that of abolitionist. The practical concerns of the country were constantly brought up against mere preachers; not even Republicans, in the mass, believed seriously that the Union would last without a slaveholding caste; and it was no wonder that those against whose heads were flung the ugly epithets of "freedom-shrieker," "negro-worshipper," "woolly-head" and "Black Republican,"—or at least the politicians among them,—should seek for better ballast by winning from among their Northern fellow-citizens as many as possible of that solid and respectable set who held the social keys and were in league with the college-bred.* Amid all these efforts for

* While Banks was governor of Massachusetts the old Hancock mansion on Beacon hill, near the State House, was offered for sale. When the proposal was made in the legislature to purchase this historical building as an Executive residence, a Democrat wittily observed that the Republicans were "trying to get into good society."

changing and broadening the scope of the new Anti-Nebraska party, -- this spreading of the net to catch conservatives, -- while others, again, had a hyper-devotion for the negro cause which betokened insincerity, -- many of the best Republicans doubted seriously that the anti-slavery men had either the faith or the sagacity to make a President. There were not, they thought, enough anti-slavery men who were honest; while as for the impracticables, the rabid abolitionists, slavery had not another body of servitors half so useful and efficient.*

The Republicans had been hoping since 1856 to conquer in 1860. Though the Democratic schism was a god-send to them, yet the charge of sectionalism was a heavy load to carry. The ideal candidate would have been from one of the slave States, but there was no one with weight of character sufficient. Edward Bates, of Missouri, a former Whig, came nearest to this description, but he was better fitted to counsel than direct. Seward was, by all odds, the foremost man in the party; as governor and senator of the greatest State in the Union, he had borne the burden and heat of the cause long before public sympathy came to his side. Chase, his worthiest competitor, conceded to him the merit of superiority. But years and increasing success had raised up rivals to Seward, while he had been the target of all party foes; and prophet though he was, his "irrepressible conflict" made men afraid of defeat under him as a standard-bearer. While the sagacious had thus looked about, Illinois Republicans had pushed their peculiar candidate in such a way that should Seward, the natural nominee for President, fail of success, he would forestall all others. And surely, in the candidacy of "honest Abe Lincoln," there was something which announced him as, almost providentially, the man for the times. His Whig antecedents, and his whole cast and habits, indulged the idea of conservatism; locality was in his favor, could disappointed rivals from the greater States take up the march under him; if

* See Horace Greeley's letter in 2 Thurlow Weed's Life, 255.

not a slaveholder, the whole record of his life and early struggles exemplified the happy transfer from slave to free institutions; while his unique and striking personality, his sympathetic qualities, his raciness, and the homely honesty and steadfast moral purpose which lit up his whole character, were sure to impress the people in his favor. And withal, Lincoln's long absence from public service favored that unacquaintance for which many an ambitious man would gladly exchange that dangerous talisman, a public record. And finally, there was something like poetic justice in putting forward the man who had won over Douglas a moral victory to oppose him again on a fairer field. Lincoln had been strong enough in the convention of 1856 to poll a respectable vote as Vice-President; but he was now immeasurably stronger, though far from being appreciated beyond his immediate environment, in his consummate tact and the subtler qualities of his statesmanship.

No efforts had been spared by Lincoln's personal friends to force him to the front. In the Illinois Republican

1859. State convention in May, 1859, he was brought into the hall in a dramatic manner, simultaneously with two old fence rails he had once mauled, as "the rail-splitter candidate for the Presidency."* In February, 1860, heralded by his Western renown, and before as celebrated an audience as Webster could ever have addressed, he spoke by invitation at Cooper Institute, as the junior Blair and Cassius M. Clay had done at earlier meetings, and carried his hearers by as logical and convincing a presentation of the historical case for slavery prohibition in the territories as was ever uttered. He went into adjacent States, and remained long enough in this Atlantic vicinity to aid the cause and make himself felt. And now, when the memorable Chicago convention met on the 16th May,

1860, organized by the choice of the faithful Wilmot May 16-18. as temporary chairman, and George Ashmun, of Massachusetts, a friend of Daniel Webster, uncorroded by

* Holland's Lincoln, 198.

false conservatism, as the permanent one, adopted unanimously a series of resolutions which, with others of Whig and paternal tendency, proclaimed freedom as the normal condition of the whole national territory, the delegations of the free States gave the country a surprise and, as events proved, an inspiration. A "wigwam," expressly erected and dedicated for the occasion, decorated with flags, evergreens, and bunting, held the thousand Republican delegates on the platform, while vast galleries, and an open space which held ten times as many, were filled with spectators whose applause and interruptions were magnetic. The voting commenced after the names of candidates had been presented, and on the first ballot Seward led as expected; but Lincoln, whose name the crowd had cheered uproariously, stood second, with Cameron, Chase, and Bates behind. The second ballot showed an understanding with the Pennsylvania delegates, by which their candidate, Cameron, was dropped, and their votes were transferred to Lincoln, who soared to the side of Seward, with scarce three votes behind. The votes of Ohio and of Chase's friends, on the third ballot, with help from Massachusetts, carried Lincoln beyond to a majority; and as State after State changed its ballot, the whole hall rose in commotion, while messengers on the roof conveyed the news to the multitude outside. Amid the roar of cannon and the cheers of ten thousand within and twenty thousand without the hall, a painting of the successful candidate was brought in from outside. Hannibal Hamlin, of Maine, was nominated for Vice-President on a second ballot, and the Republican ticket was complete.*

* See newspapers; 2 Weed's Memoirs, c. 22. Weed, who engineered Seward's candidacy, felt chagrin, as did Seward, at the practical defection of Greeley, who, being present as a delegate to represent Oregon, took the utmost pains to persuade other State delegations that Seward could not be elected if nominated. A private letter was soon after brought to light which placed Greeley in an unpleasant attitude; but he has insisted that his motives were honorable and for the best welfare of his party. Lincoln's final vote was 354 out of 466. The New York delegation did not change their vote from Seward, but one of the number moved to make Lincoln's majority unanimous.

When the Democratic convention met at Baltimore, pursuant to its adjournment, a conflict arose over ^{June 18-23} the question of admitting original delegates who had seceded at Charleston, or others who had since been chosen in their place. Upon this issue many delegates withdrew, including Cushing, the chairman. Those who remained proceeded to complete the nomination of Douglas for President, according to party usages. Benjamin Fitzpatrick, of Alabama, was selected for the second place, but declined after the adjournment, and a committee substituted Herschel V. Johnson, of the same State. The seceding delegates at Baltimore, with Cushing in the chair, organized a separate convention, and after adopting the slave-holders' platform discarded at Charleston, chose as their standard-bearers John C. Breckinridge, of Kentucky (the present Vice-President), and Joseph Lane, of Oregon.

^{June 26.} Meantime the Southern convention, which had met at Richmond and adjourned to await the action at Baltimore, reassembled on the 26th of the month and ratified unanimously the choice of Breckinridge and Lane.* The party disruption among the Democrats was final and irrevocable for the present epoch.

The Presidential campaign of 1860 ought never to be forgotten. The events to which it unexpectedly led leave it of the most signal consequence in history; and yet few

^{May-} national contests were ever fought where the discussion was more temperate and where enthusiasm ^{November} ran less to folly. Little or no idolatry of personal candidates was observable. There was no Clay, no Jackson, no Tippecanoe, to furnish hurrah points; but on all hands the effort appeared to be to impress the great mass of doubtful voters by the force of argument. Republicans argued soberly that the time had come for men to take courageous stand upon moral principle, be the consequences as they might. Their opponents strove, as America's greatest orators had striven before, to inculcate the necessity of con-

* Newspapers.

cession and fraternal harmony. The precise tenor of discussion in the slave States during these months has not been carefully noted; for Northern speakers made little circuit of that inhospitable region; but the most fiery of Southern orators took heed to restrain their tongues, so as to avoid offending the North, for it was felt throughout the land that the decisive battles of the campaign must be fought out in the free-labor States. In their letters of acceptance, all the four candidates for the Presidency, however they might differ on other points, concurred in expressing a determination to uphold the Union and Constitution as inviolable; though Breckinridge, it was observed, pledged his faith in an equivocal manner, proclaiming "the Constitution and the equality of the States" as emblems alike of national permanence.

The Republican party was in splendid condition to profit by the schism of the Democrats. Without mingling in the fray, Lincoln calmly took the place of honor assigned to him, and day by day increased the confidence that his nomination was the right one. Citizens of Illinois had not suffered the Chicago convention to disperse in ill humor, but prevailed upon as many as possible of the Eastern delegates, to whom the candidate was a stranger, to go down to Springfield under their own escort, and pay "honest Abe" a visit. In a plain two-story frame house, adorned with shrubbery, and occupying a quiet part of the town, Lincoln received his distinguished guests with an easy self-possession quite different from what his fame as flat-boatman and rail-splitter had led them to expect; a man over six feet high, who could be looked up to in a land where all were thought "little giants." With the shrewd caution so characteristic of him as a politician, he avoided political remarks at this gathering when a committee officially announced his nomination, but promised to consider the resolutions of the convention and respond in writing; and his letter of acceptance, which followed in due time, clearly and compactly stated in three full sentences — the shortest letter from any one of the candidates — approved the convention platform in every re-

spect. This was no time, of course, for making proselytes in the slave States; a Republican convention held at Baltimore in April, over which Montgomery Blair presided, had been mobbed and broken up; * nor could Southern men even like the Blairs give the party a decent footing within the slave borders. But throughout the free States, and wherever the Republican banner was flung to the breeze, Lincoln's quiet influence was felt, strengthening and consolidating his followers. Disappointed aspirants were soothed and reassured by his solicitude. Seward, with a calm philosophy which the godlike Webster had failed to exemplify, put defeated aspirations aside and in a few weeks was seen stumping the States East and West on Lincoln's behalf.† Party managers at first dejected soon worked for the candidate with a will.‡ Edward Bates, of Missouri, was one of the earliest to indorse the nomination. Cameron lent his hand in Pennsylvania to admirable arrangements for carrying that State over to the cause. The Republicans had some excellent popular orators,—Fessenden, Hale, Wilson, Seward, Chase, Trumbull, Adams, Burlingame, Corwin, Sherman, Stevens, and Caleb B. Smith, among those who now or formerly figured in Congress; and not the least among such as had no political antecedents was Carl Schurz, a young foreigner who spoke good English, but whose special aptitude for this campaign was in addressing German audiences in their own tongue.§ Young men, and the Germans of the Mid-

* 2 Seward's Life, c. 49.

† Ib.

‡ Thurlow Weed was induced by two of Lincoln's personal friends to make an express visit to Springfield to talk over the political prospects. He found Lincoln so practical and sagacious, with such intuitive knowledge of human nature and of the virtues and infirmities of politicians, that he returned to New York his hearty supporter. 1 Weed's Memoirs, c. 62.

§ Eminent Northern clergymen, like Henry Ward Beecher, spoke in sympathy with the Republican cause; as also did George William Curtis and others identified more closely with literature. The eloquence of Wendell Phillips, which would have been so becoming at this time, was unfortunately wanting. Finding a fugitive-slave clause in the bill for emancipation in the District of Columbia which Lincoln had introduced

dle and Western States, caught quickly the true spirit of the campaign. Great was the demand for the joint debates of "Douglas and Lincoln" in 1858; and Republican managers circulated the pamphlet confidently for their cause without a word of comment. The folly of "wigwams" and "rail-splitters' battalions" with which the campaign opened, as though to idolize the earlier achievements of a candidate who had risen superior to opportunities, merged presently into the more appropriate earnestness of "wide-awake clubs," which marched in nightly procession, bearing aloft their lantern torches, and wearing caps and capes of glazed or enamelled cloth of some chosen color, such as buff, white, black, or yellow. A Zouave drill which had been lately exhibited in our cities was imitated in the club manœuvres; and a peculiar staccato cheer, also resembling that of the Zouaves, which was sharp and short, like the bark of a dog, supplanted the prolonged "hurrah" of former days. An adaptation of "Dixie" (the last of the famous negro melodies of the present era) was the favorite campaign song. "Free speech, free men, free homes, free territory," made the chief theme of the Republican transparencies. And while mauls and axes were frequently carried with the torches, and the vulgar humor of a flat-boat and rail-splitting candidate was allowed much scope, the real enthusiasm of the canvass was that of a high moral purpose, conducted under an honest, intelligent, and self-educated leader, who had risen from poverty by sheer force of character to the station for which he was fitted under the genius of our free institutions. This was true democracy; and no man, so truly a democrat with reference to all races of mankind as Abraham Lincoln had ever before been proposed for President.

Young patricians of the Bell-Everett party flung out flags and ran up and down to the tinkling of a bell. These were their devices to attract popular attention. Able and

into Congress in 1849, he attacked the latter fiercely in the "Liberator" as "the slave hound of Illinois."

conservative speakers of this party deplored the sectional tendencies of the times, and pleaded for fraternity. Sam Houston harped on the same string ; and some Northern politicians put him up as an independent candidate for the Presidency ; but the movement developed no strength, and the Texan governor was soon forced to withdraw, leaving the field to the other four competitors.

As between Douglas and Breckinridge, every good supporter of the administration had to choose for himself. President Buchanan in a public speech announced that there had been no regular nomination of the party, and that, therefore, any Democrat might vote consistently for the one or the other. Nevertheless, the whole influence of his administration was thrown in favor of Breckinridge, who, though not great, was esteemed a man of honor and sincere utterances. Douglas, thrown upon his own resources, set a new example to Presidential candidates by taking the stump, and in his combative fashion accosting the voters face to face. After a Northern tour, he proceeded to Virginia and North Carolina, and then journeyed West. His rôle was a difficult one. He bemoaned slavery agitation, and yet he had done most to arouse it ; he maintained his specious principle of non-intervention by Congress with slavery in the territories, and yet that principle was already a failure. The necessities of his cause forced him to maintain that the nominations of both Lincoln and Breckinridge, and the principles on which they were supported, were sectional alike, and hostile to the perpetuity of the Union. But, to do Douglas justice, he planted himself firmly upon loyal allegiance to the Constitution and laws ; and when asked, at a Virginia gathering, whether the election of the Republican candidate would afford a just cause for the secession of the slave States, declared that it would not.*

This same question, no doubt, rose to the lips of many honest Southerners, who pondered anxiously over the

* This was at Norfolk, Virginia ; and at a great barbecue near New York city, afterwards, Douglas reiterated this sentiment.

present situation. Breckinridge himself wrote, no doubt sincerely, of his personal attachment to the Union ; but, like thousands of his followers, he could not comprehend the disunion influences which bore him onward, nor his own moral inability to resist them successfully. This campaign was initiated with no great zeal and acrimony. Not even the Kansas, the territorial issue, presented aspects so exciting as in 1856; but the more the moral courage grew and displayed its strength in the free section, the more did the spirit of the slave States rebel at the humiliation in prospect for them. The situation, indeed, as between two contradictory labor systems, was that of an "irrepressible conflict," and in the philosophy of that situation lies the best apology for the events which followed, the medicine for future reconciliation.

In alarm at the favoring prospect of the Republicans, various propositions were broached for the fusion of their adversaries in Northern States, so as to carry the electoral colleges in any event, agreeably to the scope of discretion which the Constitution literally confers. Fusion was accomplished in a measure in New York State, where election results were of the greatest consequence, and also in New Jersey ; but it was found easier, practically, to unite thus the supporters of Bell and Douglas than to fuse the two sections of the Democracy.

The spring elections this year had given to each national party about the usual encouragement. March, Goodwin, a Republican, was chosen governor of April. New Hampshire, much to the chagrin of ex-President Pierce, who had lately returned from abroad, more Southern in his sympathies than ever.* Connecticut, against desperate obstacles, yielded a Republican victory, and

* See Pierce's letter of January 6, 1860, to Jefferson Davis (quoted in Appleton's Cyclopædia of Biography, "Pierce"), which foolishly predicts that, in case of Southern disruption of the Union, there will be interneceine war in Northern States. The ex-President came out in favor of Breckinridge, disdaining Douglas, after the Democratic conventions.

shook off Toucey forever; while Rhode Island, on the other hand, chose for governor the popular William Sprague, who had more than the nominal Democracy behind him.

August. The August elections in several Southern States resulted encouragingly to the friends of Bell and Everett. Vermont and Maine, in September,

September, adhered, as expected, to the Republican cause.

October. It was the October elections in Ohio, Indiana,

and Pennsylvania, that forecast most clearly the issue of the national struggle. Ohio's less important contest was over inferior officers; but in Indiana Henry S. Lane, the Republican candidate for governor, defeated Thomas A. Hendricks, his opponent; while in Pennsylvania, Andrew G. Curtin, a man of splendid promise, was borne into the Executive chair by 32,000 majority. Each of these latter States chose a legislature Republican in both branches. Pennsylvania and Indiana, doubtful States hitherto, clasped hands across Ohio for Republican principles.

These October elections clearly foreshadowed the choice of Abraham Lincoln in November. In New York the Republicans had renominated Edwin D. Morgan, an excellent governor, against divers other candidates, and headed their electoral ticket with the name of William Cullen

Bryant. Lincoln's candidacy now grew every day *November.* stronger, as the 6th of November approached.

The polls closed by sunset of that day, and by midnight votes had been counted, and telegraphic news received from Northern States sufficient to make positive the results. Republicans had just cause for elation. All the electoral votes of the free States were theirs, with a majority from New Jersey, and, as turned out unexpectedly, the votes of the two Pacific States, California and Oregon, with which they had meant to dispense. Although the footings of some States were quite close, Lincoln and Hamlin were chosen by a majority of 180 out of 303 electoral votes, 152 being all that their majority required.*

* See Electoral Tables, Appendix.

Pluralities had by this time come to determine the elections in most of the States, and Presidential electors were chosen by a popular vote in every State but South Carolina. Douglas stood next to Lincoln in the popular vote; nor was the latter's plurality sufficient, after all, over so many competitors to give him a majority. Douglas, however, made the worst failure in electoral votes, because his chief strength was spent in following behind Lincoln in the free States which the latter carried. He won the solid electoral vote of no State but Missouri, in whose gratitude there was poetic justice.* Even the Bell conservatives came out of the field with better honors, for they carried Kentucky, Tennessee, and Virginia. Almost throughout the South, in fact, Douglas had been of light weight in comparison,—the real contest being in that section between quiescent and aggressive slaveholding, union and secession, as typified in the leaders, Bell and Breckinridge, who were identified with their own domestic system. Northern candidates who faced in two directions were no longer in fashion. While Douglas fell at last between two stools, Breckinridge and the advanced school of slaveholders won eleven out of the fifteen slave States.†

Threats of disunion, which had been kept discreetly under breath until after the October elections, came up now from the remote South. The question which had been put to Douglas during his brief canvass beyond the border was now of profound consequence to every citizen of the slave region. Should a proud and imperious race of masters submit to the galling yoke of an administration which would hold their labor system in scorn and disgrace, tolerating their invested capital of human bones and sinews, rather than according to it better safeguards?

* Besides these nine electoral votes, Douglas received three in New Jersey, against four given Lincoln. This was the final outcome of the fusion efforts which had been attempted in the Middle States.

† Pluralities were very close in some States, as, for instance, in Virginia, Missouri, Maryland, North Carolina, and California.

The outlook for slavery expansion within the Union was already gloomy enough. Kansas would soon come in necessarily as a free State; the violent death of Walker cast a pall over all schemes for acquiring neighboring territory by the agency of private adventurers; and as for public enterprises in Cuba, in Mexico, or wherever else the seed of caste might be sown, the advent of a President like Lincoln meant indefinite postponement. The full measure of Southern humiliation was by no means appreciated in the free States. Northern men considered such threats thrasonic and vaporizing. They knew that the Union was essential to the very existence of slavery, and supposed their Southern brethren equally convinced of it. The charge made by Southern orators who came North, like the fervid Yancey, that the South was intrenched behind the Constitution while the North was trying to break the barrier, they honestly felt to be untrue. So they went on, stronger than ever in attachment to their principles, to roll up greater pluralities for November. Merchants and financiers gave in their final adhesion to the cause of the Republicans, persuaded that in manliness and fidelity to right lay the correct policy for the times. South and North had entered the Presidential strife as though honorably intending to abide results. And no result of a national ballot could have been plainer or more legitimate. There was no fraud, no cloud upon title, no room for doubtful disputation. If ever a President was elected over all opponents by the requisite number of votes in a free, open, and stubborn contest, that President was Abraham Lincoln.

In the *Constitution*, a newspaper published at the capital under the inspiration of the Secretary of the Treasury, and fed upon the treasury patronage, appeared ^{November,} a rabid article, just after the election, proclaiming that the South could not submit to the administration of Lincoln. "Dissolution is inevitable if the Black Republicans triumph," had been, in fact, the burden of Southern journals for a month; and now came telegraphic intelligence that most of the cotton States medi-

tated instant disunion. In Virginia a jealous rivalry had been manifested between Wise and Governor Letcher, the latter supporting Douglas, while the former bore the red standard of secession. Even Letcher's advice inclined to making common cause with the South in the event of secession; while Wise, in his fury, would have seized Washington city, and held the public buildings and treasure as security for Southern redress.

A resolution was promptly passed by the legislature of Alabama which instructed the governor of the State to call a convention immediately upon ascertaining that a Republican President was elected. In Alabama, Mississippi, and Florida, the disposition to secede soon predominated. South Carolina was nearly unanimous in favor of such a step; and in Georgia, Arkansas, and Texas, the feeling gained rapid ascendency, notwithstanding prominent leaders were reluctant to take the step. South Carolina led in impetuous rebellion. Governor Gist counselled the legislature of that State to remain in permanent session, and make military and other preparations to meet the crisis. Public gatherings at Charleston and other centres of opinion in the palmetto State emphasized the idea of immediate and independent secession, relying upon the belief that the gulf States would speedily follow. The South Carolina legislature provided accordingly for a State convention to meet on the 17th of December.

Congress met in final session on Monday, December 3d, a large majority of the members of both Houses December 3, 4. being present. Representatives from South Carolina took their seats, as usual, but both Senators from that State were absent. The victorious Republicans, whose spirits had dropped from exultation to anxiety under the past month's pressure of events, had neither system nor confidence to meet the unforeseen emergency. Their mood reflected that of their several constituencies throughout the North, who waited, as the great mass of a community are apt to wait under such circumstances, for some positive and inspiring direction. "Indecision, under the

circumstances," wrote the leader of the triumphant party in this body, "shows only that the Union sentiment is so strong as to leave the people unprepared." *

It was the opportunity for Buchanan to have sounded a trumpet note which would disconcert disloyal citizens and recall the doubtful to their duty. But the President, with three months longer to serve, had not in him the stuff of heroic purpose. He was a loyal man after his sort, but secessionism raged about him, and kept its last clutch upon his cabinet circle. His opening message was craven and cowardly for the emergency; its whole scope was to upbraid the people for their choice of a President, and exhort them to fall upon their knees to propitiate the fellow-citizens they had out-voted, and avert the dire calamity of disunion which otherwise seemed inevitable. Explanatory amendments to the Constitution were suggested as a basis of capitulation,—slavery to be recognized as rightful in all States now or hereafter choosing to adopt the system; negro ownership to be protected in all national domains while the territorial condition lasted; all State laws which interfered with the surrender of fugitive slaves to be null and void. The inefficacy of the Constitution to preserve the Union against domestic violence, such as now impended, was maintained in a fine-spun argument to the effect that, while secession was unlawful, a State which attempted to secede could not be coerced into submission. In short, the President's message, whose loyal expression was strained in the skim-milk of apology, was ill-calculated for anything but to encourage disunion to go on with its work. There was no vigor in it, no backbone; transgressors were not recalled to their loyal obligations; no money, no military strength, no means of collecting the public revenue or of protecting the public property were asked for; some phrases might be tortured into one view of executive responsibility, others into another, but the too evident meaning of the whole was irresolution.†

* 2 Seward's Life, 478.

† President's message, December 4, 1860.

No wonder, then, that while Cobb and Thompson had taken issue with their chief upon the theoretical right of secession,* they tarried longer in the cabinet to use their pernicious pressure. No wonder that Jefferson Davis and other Southern leaders at the capitol took a haughty and unreconciling stand, as though the grievance were wholly theirs. The message of a Northern President alleged at length the continuous and intemperate interference of the North with questions of local slavery. But had the South shown no aggression? It asked that the slave States be let alone. But why were constitutional amendments called for to buttress slavery in new regions which it chose to enter? And why did that same message insist, moreover, upon the scheme of annexing Cuba and taking another slice from Mexico? Republicans riddled with their satire, as it deserved, the feeble cobweb of Buchanan's constitutional exposition.† This was no time for spiders' syllogisms, for political metaphysics. With ingenious disquisitions upon the inner sense of the Constitution, we had been overloaded since the giants of the Senate began their oratorical strife. Calhoun, who brought such disputation into fashion, was incapable, perhaps, of saying what he did not really believe; but the mechanism of his mighty mind made sound and unsound premises appear often alike when the flame of a strong purpose blew upon them. What the country wanted of its chief Executive was a bold and manly stand, a free avowal that the Union must be preserved, and the laws of the land obeyed. This would have relieved the gloom and despondency which was already gathering in business circles, while Southern payments were suspended, and the stocks of States and the national government led in a feverish decline. "O for

* See 2 Curtis's Buchanan, c. 16.

† Hale summed it up wittily in three propositions: (1) that South Carolina had just cause to secede; (2) that she had no right to secede; (3) that we had no right to prevent her. Seward wrote of the message: "It shows conclusively that it is the duty of the President to execute the laws,—unless somebody opposes him,—and that no State has a right to go out of the Union — unless it wants to." 2 Seward, 480.

an hour of Jackson!" was the spontaneous cry of conscience Democrats. Never before was the weak joint of our constitutional armor so clearly exposed, which kept the whole resources of this vast government sequestered for four months after the people had declared their will, in control of an administration and Congress defeated at the polls.*

Southern disunionists did not falter; they were not spinning out distinctions, just now, for the vanity of a constitutional argument, but they went straight forward to their object. South Carolina took the field quickly. The State

convention met at Columbia on the 17th of December, but small-pox prevailing there, an adjournment was carried so as to meet at Charleston on the following day. A salute of fifteen guns — one for each slaveholding State — welcomed the members to this latter city. On the 20th of the month an ordinance of secession, reported from an appropriate committee, was unanimously adopted; and after being engrossed on parchment, was publicly signed by all the members of the convention, — one hundred and sixty-nine in number, — who thought, no doubt, that in their chamber fame was born.† A "declaration of independence" followed on the 24th, which bor-

* Black, the attorney general, who had given the main legal idea of the message, himself objected to the pusillanimous turn, unfavorable to "coercing a State," which the President's message had lent to his argument. See, at length, 2 Curtis's Buchanan, cs. 15, 16.

† This ordinance (which served as the model for other seceding States) was styled "An ordinance to dissolve the Union between the State of South Carolina and other States united with her under the compact entitled 'the Constitution of the United States of America.'" It read as follows: "We, the people of the State of South Carolina, in convention assembled, do declare and ordain, and it is hereby declared and ordained, that the ordinance adopted by us in convention on the twenty-third day of May, in the year of our Lord 1788, whereby the Constitution of the United States was ratified, and also all acts and parts of acts of the General Assembly of this State, ratifying amendments of the said Constitution, are hereby repealed, and that the union now subsisting between South Carolina and other States under the name of 'The United States of America,' is hereby dissolved."

rowed the immortal phrase of Jefferson in mutually pledging "our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor." But what a recital of grievances was this upon which South Carolina based the resumption of her "separate and equal place among nations," — agitation at the North, and the spread of abolition societies, as though to pronounce slavery sinful; the passage of personal liberty acts, and persistent refusal to restore fugitive slaves as the Constitution required; and finally, the election by a geographical party of a man who had declared that this government could not endure, permanently, half-slave and half-free. Not a word in the whole document of Texas, the Mexican war, the repeal of the Missouri compromise, or the persistent efforts the South had been making in various directions to extend its institutions into free territory during the past twenty years or more. But for such persistent aggressions on slavery's behalf, moral agitation at the North would have burned with a feeble flame.

Rash, impulsive, and uncalculating as South Carolina had always been, she showed her readiness to stand alone, this second time, in experimenting with the theories of her favorite statesman. But commissioners from Alabama and Mississippi had encouraged immediate action, promising the co-operation of their States; and South Carolina labored earnestly to induce other slave States to plunge into secession after her, appointing commissioners for that purpose, and painting in the most glowing colors the prospects of a new and independent Southern Union, based upon negro slavery. The Charleston convention argued in an address that the government of the United States had degenerated into a consolidated Democracy, which laid oppressive taxes at the South to spend in the North. "A great slaveholding confederacy, stretching its arms over a territory larger than any power in Europe possesses," offered a new object for Southern allegiance; "with a population four times greater than that of the whole United States when they achieved their independence of the British empire; with productions which make its existence more important to the world than that of any other people inhabiting it;

with common institutions to defend and common dangers to encounter." By such roseate representations was the effort made throughout the gulf region "to fire the Southern heart."

After passing on the 20th the ordinance of secession, this convention despatched three commissioners to Washington, Robert W. Barnwell, James H. Adams, and James L. Orr, to negotiate a division of the public property and a surrender of the forts in Charleston harbor. Millions of dollars had lately been expended by Congress in this ungrateful city and New Orleans to build new custom-houses. The national fortifications in Charleston consisted at this time of Forts Moultrie and Sumter and Castle Pinckney, the harbor comprising an expanding bay, which was land-locked and had a difficult bar at the entrance. Fort Moultrie was a large work which required some seven hundred men to garrison it fully; but its only force at the present time consisted of about sixty men, commanded by a loyal and valiant officer, Major Robert Anderson, of Kentucky. It was exposed to attack on the land side. Fort Sumter, which was now occupied only by workmen who were mounting the guns, was more impregnable than Moultrie, when properly manned, being situated on an island; and to this sea-girt stronghold Anderson resolved to transfer his command, when he found that the South Carolinians were zealously preparing to seize all the forts, and that the President would send him no reinforcements. The night of December 26th, soon after the Charleston convention had adjourned, saw his little garrison concentrated at Fort Sumter, after spiking the cannon and destroying their carriages at Moultrie. There was intense excitement at Charleston on the next day, when this became known, and the State authorities at once seized Fort Moultrie and Castle Pinckney in the name of South Carolina. The Palmetto flag was hoisted also over the custom-house and post-office, the Federal officials having all resigned their appointments; and a few days later the United States arsenal, with public property estimated at half a million dollars, was captured in defiance of the Federal govern-

ment. Calhoun had pleaded in his day for "peaceable secession," — for permitting the discontented sisters to "depart in peace." But this generation of Carolinian guides showed little comprehension of such philosophy, save so far as they might have expected meekness and servile compliance from that tremendous Northern mass — that mob of a majority — which they goaded so arrogantly. In their present temper they could not begin to penetrate the difficulties of the task they had proposed on their sole responsibility. They were like men drunk with new wine; and the ready chronicles of Northern news as "foreign" in their local press, the quick suppression of the national colors for the Palmetto flag, and a thousand little punctilio for secession's sake, showed how childishly they strove to keep up the illusions of independence. South Carolina had never, in truth, even within her own confines, realized in the full sense submission to the will of the people.

The commissioners of this errant State reached Washington city inflated with the idea of being recognized as the representatives of a seceding and independent sovereignty, and of arranging in some way with the United States for an ignominious surrender, to a State numbering some seven hundred thousand, of the forts and public property which belonged to thirty-one millions of people. South Carolina had proceeded with sublime temerity, as though the rest of the Union must admit her sovereign independence upon her own fiat. She struck for rebellion and a new confederacy before the victorious Republicans could come into power, and while the reins of national office were still held by an administration which showed the white feather and bent under the weight of disloyal influences. The three commissioners — one of whom had but lately laid down the Speaker's gavel in the south wing of the capitol — were sure not to be arrested as traitors. But in undertaking to negotiate concerning the "new relations" of their State to the Union, they heeded too lightly the circumstance that Buchanan, with all his miserable petti-

foggery against "coercing a State," had refused to admit the right of secession. Even were that right conceded, the divestment of the Federal title to forts and public property in and about South Carolina by no means followed. Indeed that property reservation in the United States against all local menaces or violence whatsoever was what reduced secession to a logical absurdity, and gave to the loyal people of America, a few months later, their first palpable object for rallying in arms to the defence of the flag. The rashness of imperious South Carolina was too headlong for the arts of diplomacy to avail anything; they flung logic to the winds; "give up the forts or we will take them," was the tenor of their insulting embassy. Buchanan had been approached still more insultingly on this point already; for Governor Pickens, of South Carolina, before his State had seceded and before Major Anderson had removed his troops, sent a written demand that Fort Sumter be delivered into his hands.*

Imbecile and treacherous counsels had long prevailed at Washington over the question of these strongholds. As far

Oct. 29-30. back as October, Scott, as general-in-chief of the army, had pointed out the defenceless condition of the Southern forts, and the danger of their seizure in the event of Lincoln's election. He apprehended Southern experiments at secession, and advised that the several garrisons be quietly increased at once.† Scott's advice was sound, but the President ignored it utterly; nor would the rebellious sympathizers of his Cabinet probably have permitted such a step.‡ That energy which had been directed so lately against

* 2 Curtis's Buchanan, 383, 384. A messenger bore to the President this letter (which was written on the 17th of December); but upon a conference with South Carolina men in Washington, Pickens was induced to withdraw this letter, and the President sent no reply.

† 2 Scott's Memoirs, 610; 2 Curtis's Buchanan, c. 14.

‡ In defence of Buchanan on this point, it has been said that the reinforcement of Southern forts would have been too much of a "menace" to Southern States. And besides that there were forts at five important points which General Scott's advice thus covered; whereas our army was small, and so great a force could not well be spared from the West. 2 Curtis's Buchanan, c. 14. But could no means be found of adding to the

"treason" in Kansas and Utah was nowhere discernible. General Scott reached the capital from New York on the 12th of December; and it happened that verbal orders ignoring him had been sent through Floyd, the Secretary of War, to Major Anderson, which informed the latter why reinforcements were refused upon his request, but directed him to hold the forts of Charleston harbor with his present force so long as reasonable hope remained, avoiding all acts of needless aggression.* Scott urged once more upon the President the immediate reinforcement of Anderson, pressing the example of Jackson in 1833, but Buchanan refused. It would provoke civil war, he replied, and turn the country, besides, from considering measures of compromise such as he had brought to the attention of Congress. But, while claiming that he had no authority to call out the militia or to accept the services of volunteers, and breathing no wish for Congress to vest him with compulsory powers, Buchanan had sent Caleb Cushing to the Charleston secessionists on a secret mission of remonstrance, which did, of course, no good.

Barnwell, Adams, and Orr, the commissioners, reached Washington on the 26th of December. On the next morning they received the startling bulletin of Anderson's midnight move from Fort Moultrie to Fort Sumter. If our President, whose recent orders had given to Major Anderson this latitude of discretion, showed surprise and regret at this brilliant exploit, South Carolina's envoys were so furious as to lose their discretion altogether. In an unofficial interview — the only one which was granted them — they declared peremptorily that, before any negotiations could be entered upon, the Executive must disapprove of Anderson's act. Their demand was made even more arrogantly

protection of our Indian frontiers in view of this more serious emergency? And, after all, the pressing need was plainly at Charleston, if other Southern forts could not all be reinforced.

* These orders were reduced to writing at Fort Moultrie by Buell, the assistant adjutant-general, on the 11th of December, and were revised finally after his return. 2 Curtis's Buchanan, 376.

in a letter to the President on the following day.* Anderson and his troops must be withdrawn from the port altogether; otherwise, so they plainly intimated, South Carolina would attack him, deeming his presence a menace and an insult. These threats were hard to endure; and on the 31st of the month the President replied that while Major Anderson had moved his troops without express orders, his act would not be disowned, and Fort Sumter would be defended to the last extremity. To this the commissioners sent a response † which was so violent, unfounded, and disrespectful, that Buchanan, with the full approval of his cabinet as now constituted, returned it to the commissioners, with a brief endorsement that he declined to receive it.‡ What made this letter so peculiarly offensive was a charge it contained that the President had pledged himself not to send reinforcements to Charleston harbor, but to maintain things as they were, and that Anderson's change of position violated the pledge. No such assurance had Buchanan ever given, and the most that can be said for such an understanding is that when the Congressional friends of South Carolina tried to arrange something of the kind, he repelled them less positively than he should have done. The wish of the Charleston secessionists fathered their expectation; and their own violence in running up the Palmetto flag and expelling the government from all its other property as soon as Anderson had moved into Fort Sumter, and before ascertaining whether the President would approve of that officer's act, showed the hollowness of their own pretensions to leave things undisturbed, and gave energy to the President's answer to the commissioners. These, like all other disunionists of the times, treated Buchanan as the weak instrument of their wishes, and poured upon him their insolence.§

* December 29.

† Dated January 2, 1861.

‡ 2 Curtis's Buchanan, 373; newspapers.

§ See Jefferson Davis, in 1 Southern Confederacy, 212, who touches upon South Carolina's suggestion of the *status quo*, which some understood the President to approve, though he declined to make any formal pledge.

On the 8th of January, the anniversary of Jackson's famous victory at New Orleans, the President sent to Congress a special message containing his correspondence with South Carolina's commissioners. He still urged conciliation and harmony to save the Union, but was not tied up so tight, apparently, in his constitutional limitations as when the session first opened. For, after all, as sensible men must admit, to coerce the inhabitants of a State to obey the laws of the United States is practically to coerce that State to remain in the Union. Changes which the Cabinet had been undergoing in a month stiffened the backbone of this limp administration. First, in December, came the resignation of Howell Cobb, who left Washington and the national service to lead Georgia, his hesitating State, into secession. A valuable man would he have become to the Union cause, could he but have placed Southern finances where he had placed ours; but rebellion never trusted him with such opportunity. Miserable failure that he was known to be in conspicuous station,—a costly collector, a false calculator, a borrower of money to meet unforeseen deficiencies, which he called temporary but made permanent,—Cobb entered the service of disunion a worse bankrupt, if this were possible, and more completely discredited, than the Treasury whose dishonored obligations he left behind; and he never rose again to his former influence.* Next Cass resigned, the lagging veteran, whose indolence and inefficiency increased that popularity in which he was held of late by Union men of all parties, and which he loved above all

And see 2 Curtis's Buchanan, 376-379, which denies all countenance of a pledge on the President's side; at the same time conceding that Buchanan was facile at such interviews, bestowing no stern rebukes, but giving his hearers to understand that negotiations of the kind belonged not to him, but to Congress.

* Toombs and other compatriots of Georgia made a constant butt of Cobb this winter, as having "done more for secession than any other man," by depriving its enemies of the sinews of war and leaving them without a dollar in the Treasury. Cobb chafed under this ridicule. Johnston's A. H. Stephens, 386.

things. The reason alleged for his resignation was a popular one, and tallied well with Scott's arrival upon the scene,—that the President refused to strengthen the forts in Charleston harbor. Cass was at heart a loyal man and a patriot, whose toadyism to the South had to cease at the parting of the roads; and terminating in this way a service which could have lasted but a few weeks longer, he threw off the burden of public cares, whose weight must have been painful to one of his years, and left the stage with applause which worthier actors might have envied.*

A third resignation of the month—and this time on the disloyal side of the Cabinet—was that of John B. Floyd, the Secretary of War, whose case presents a difficult complexity of motives. Unlike Cobb and the lingering Thompson, this Secretary of War has been considered as, after the Virginia fashion of the day, a loyalist. He had been trusted with the military dispositions, and sent his own orders to Major Anderson. If his own word may be believed, he misused his trust treacherously, by baffling all plans for reinforcing the Southern forts, and distributing the regular troops at remote points in the West.† But this, perhaps, was lying and gasconade; so that Floyd's sudden conversion to disunion may be explained by being found out in impudent thefts. His conduct of the War Department began with a swindling sale of Fort Snelling, which Congress indirectly censured. He was now detected in giving fraudulent acceptances to army contractors and abstracting \$870,000, bonds of an Indian trust fund, from the Interior department in pursuance of the transaction. Buchanan did not on learning the facts expel him from the Cabinet, nor furnish the House with testimony for impeachment, but intimated through a friend that he

* Cf. McLaughlin's Cass, 338, and 2 Curtis's Buchanan, 399, which are widely different in their estimates as to Cass's motives for resigning, and the courage with which he would have been likely to sustain the President in pursuing the course he recommended.

† See Floyd's speeches in Virginia soon after his resignation from the Cabinet, which were published in the newspapers; also 2 Scott's Memoirs, 616; 2 Curtis's Buchanan, 306.

ought to resign. Floyd, when aware of this, made quick friends of the unrighteous mammon. Learning that South Carolina's commissioners were about to complain of the transfer in the Charleston forts, he rushed excitedly into the Cabinet session on the evening of December 27th, and charging the President with violating the pledges at Charleston harbor, demanded, like the commissioners themselves, that reparation should be afforded by withdrawing Major Anderson and his garrison altogether.* Outvoted on this question,† Floyd made that issue the basis of his resignation on the 29th, in a hot and offensive letter, and the President passed him out of the Cabinet circle much too meekly. Banqueted on his return to Virginia, the scapegrace Secretary of War glorified the good he had done to the secession cause; but, like his late Georgia associate among Buchanan's advisers, he gained little honor at the South beyond the wounds his service had inflicted upon the Union.‡

In reconstructing his cabinet, the President made some excellent changes. Black, the Attorney General, was at once transferred to the portfolio of State; and his former post was assigned to Edwin M. Stanton, a man of Ohio birth, unidentified with politics, whose roving practice of the law located him chiefly at Washington. Stanton's sturdy energy, and capacity for work, together with his unflinching devotion to the Union cause, bore strongly

* 2 Curtis's Buchanan, 408.

† According to newspaper report, Toucey's vote, after much faltering, went to the negative side, thus making a bare majority against the disloyal members.

‡ In 2 Curtis's Buchanan, c. 20, the subject of Floyd's recreancy is discussed, and the conclusion fairly justified that Floyd played his final rôle in the Cabinet so as to be backed by the South in his predicament over the stolen funds. Scott and other good military critics, however, remained strongly of the opinion that Floyd had long played false to his country in scattering the army of the United States so that men could not be sent South, and in distributing arms to the South; thus making this man not so much a despicable thief and liar as a despicable thief and traitor.

upon the events of the next five years, which left few more prominent figures; while Black, less easily swept away from party friends and affiliations, was yet so disgusted with the whimpering tone of the President's dealings with disunionists that he would have resigned, had not the latter changed the draft of his response to the South Carolina commissioners, so as to make it more manly.* Tremulous with the fear of being deserted by his new premier, as he had been by the ungrateful Cass, Buchanan handed the paper to his fellow Pennsylvanian, and asked him beseechingly to modify it to suit himself. From that time forth the administration was ruled by its thoroughly loyal advisers. Holt, who had administered so well the duties of Postmaster General, took Floyd's place in the War Department, at first temporarily; and with Black, Stanton, and Holt, the old general-in-chief, Winfield Scott, found himself in hearty accord.

Opening under these brighter auspices, the new year saw the administration compelled to purge itself still

^{January.} further of disloyalty. To Cobb's important place

^{1861.} in the treasury, the President had promoted Philip F. Thomas, of Maryland, the commissioner of patents. Northern people felt no confidence in his competency, for he rattled round in so great an office, and though prudently holding his tongue, acted in full sympathy with the enemies of the Union.† Tentative measures were now discussed upon Scott's renewed entreaties ‡ that more troops

* 2 Curtis's Buchanan, 379. Buchanan in this draft had not only spoken rather disapprovingly of Major Anderson's act, but inclined to encourage a negotiation between South Carolina and Congress, and reiterated the want of constitutional power to "coerce a State."

† His cabinet vote was given December 27th, with that of Floyd and Thompson, in favor of withdrawing Anderson and his forces from Charleston harbor to please South Carolina.

‡ 2 Scott's Memoirs, 616, quotes admissions from Southern papers to the effect that had he been able to carry out the plans he proposed for strengthening the garrisons of the Southern forts, there would have been no Southern Confederacy.

and supplies be sent to Fort Sumter. The administration vacillated in purpose. Instructions had issued on the last day of December to send the "Brooklyn," a naval vessel, to Charleston harbor; but at a Cabinet meeting held in the evening these orders were suspended, and the President promised Thompson, his Secretary of the Interior, that they would not be renewed without a vote of the Cabinet. On the 2d of January the Cabinet was convened to reconsider the subject, and after an ample discussion Thompson and Thomas were overborne, and it was decided to send reinforcements to Anderson without delay.* But now, instead of an armed vessel like the "Brooklyn," was despatched a mere merchant steamer, "The Star of the West," † which sailed from New York harbor on the 5th of January, having on board two hundred and fifty men. A more trivial trial was never made of the national strength. What a contrast with the imposing fleet of burnished cannon which overawed so lately a South American State, was this single side-wheeled steamer, without a gun on board, which, arriving off Charleston harbor on the 9th of January, was fired upon by the rebel batteries, and then vanished into the horizon like the spectral ship of the Dutch legend. Major Anderson was forced to conjecture for himself what all this might mean; but not so were the authorities of South Carolina, for Jacob Thompson, the Secretary of the Interior, had treacherously betrayed the expedition to them by a telegram. The unarmed passenger vessel puffed and paddled her way back, still flying the insulted national colors, to find orders sent the very day she had sailed, which countermanded her departure. ‡

* It was at this meeting that the insulting "last letter" of the South Carolina commissioners was read, which the Cabinet agreed should be returned to them. An immediate attack upon Fort Sumter was apprehended. 2 Curtis's Buchanan, 402, 407.

† A question of veracity afterwards arose between Buchanan and General Scott as to whether the latter had approved of this substitution. 2 Curtis, 447.

‡ One reason of this attempted countermand was a letter received

On this same 9th of January, Mississippi in convention passed an ordinance of secession. Thompson, in anticipation of it, determined to resign his seat in Buchanan's cabinet; but in doing so, on the 8th, he affected great indignation at the news that the "Star of the West" had sailed, and charged the President with breach of faith. It was indeed true that the orders given had been concealed from the Secretary of the Interior, for the very reason that he was likely to betray the movement to the enemy as he had proceeded to do. But Buchanan's pledge was fulfilled by the special Cabinet meeting which, against Thompson's wishes, decided to send reinforcements; and Buchanan, in accepting the resignation, said with some spirit that he had expected it to be tendered as the result of that decision.*

Thomas's resignation followed naturally on the 11th of the month. He had failed utterly to renovate the public credit which his predecessor had shattered so disastrously. Wall street and the Northern financiers, whose support in the late elections had gone deliberately to the Republican candidates, refused to lend a dollar to the government so long as a suspected rebel presided at the treasury. Buchanan had not expelled, nor even called for the resignation of a single individual of his circle, even when the official was smirched like Floyd with embezzlement, or compromised like Thompson by the betrayal of official secrets. He accepted Thomas's resignation very cheerfully, and called to his place a loyal and most efficient Secretary in John A. Dix. That tried and uncorrupt Democrat laid a bold hand upon the abuses and taints which disloyalty had fostered in this department; pursuing the same lines of reform which he had instituted in the New York post-office, sending to the House an intelligent statement of what present exigencies required,

from Major Anderson at the War Department which stated that the secessionists had erected a heavy battery among the sand-hills at the entrance to Charleston harbor.

* 2 Curtis's Buchanan, 403.

encouraging public confidence in the national stability, and causing Northern capitalists to uncover the funds they had been tempted to hoard in distrust. One memorable order to his revenue officers thrilled as no other utterance which ever emanated from this departing administration : "If any man attempts to haul down the American flag, shoot him on the spot."*

Holt's transfer to the War Department being now fully established, Horatio King, of Maine, was made Postmaster General by promotion from assistant. The vacancy left by Thompson in the Interior Department was not filled, but the routine duties were performed by the chief clerk. And thus, at length, a loyal set of advisers, all of whom but Toucey were popularly trusted, guided and braced up the administration like some tottering old tree. The irresistible pressure of loyal opinion compelled all this,—that latent conservatism of our American democracy, which preserves the vital principle in times of danger. Nerveless and shattered, hoping little more than to save the government until his few weeks of responsibility should expire, Buchanan gave no direction to events, no inspiration. He was borne on by the brave spirits of his Cabinet and by General Scott, as bold swimmers encircle a drowning man and bear him safely to shore. Limited monarchs have been thus compelled to remodel their councils, but never before had an American President.

Yet Buchanan, in his weak and wavering condition of mind, was no unfit subject for Southern influences at the capital to operate upon. Southern Democrats, in and out of Congress, his late intimates, now arranged with him a sort of qualified armistice which was to last through the rest of his term. He was to make no further attempt to reinforce the forts of rebellious harbors ; and the seceders in return were to abstain from capturing them during the rest of Buchanan's term. This arrangement was effected soon after the "Star of the West" incident. Left to his own conjecture as to what the appearance and departure

* 1 John A. Dix, *Memoirs*, 346.

of that vessel might mean, Major Anderson had sent a flag of truce ashore to Governor Pickens, demanding an official disavowal of the outrage. The governor responded by demanding a surrender of Fort Sumter; whereupon Anderson, as prudence compelled him, proposed a reference of the whole subject to his superiors. A new commission to Washington, in the person of Colonel Hayne, was the consequence, but the President refused to receive or treat with him officially. Senators of nine cotton States, however, with Jefferson Davis at the head, prevailed upon the headstrong Pickens to let his new demand go nonsuited; and by their cooler management a back-handed truce such as we have described was arranged with the President respecting Charleston harbor; and Anderson, who, though a Kentuckian and an honorable officer, had been treated of late by the Palmetto authorities as a public enemy, was allowed access to the Charleston markets, which had been denied him, for fuel and fresh provisions. A similar arrangement of *status quo* was effected, through Hunter and Slidell, with reference to Fort Pickens, at Pensacola, which the brave Lieutenant Slemmer had refused to surrender; and this place, as mutually agreed upon, our government supplied with victuals.*

Other cotton States than South Carolina had before this resolved themselves out of the Union,—States, all but one of them, which had neither part nor lot in the original compact of the Constitution, but had all been erected out of national territory. During the month of January there were five of these formal secessions.

* See 2 Curtis's Buchanan, c. 22, which replies to some of General Scott's strictures regarding these humiliating arrangements. The fact of such a "qualified armistice" at Charleston and Pensacola is clearly admitted; but on Buchanan's part it is claimed that Scott, as well as Secretaries Holt and Toucey, knew of the arrangements and approved them verbally. A letter from Holt in New York Tribune, March 7, 1861, describes the efforts made to reinforce Fort Sumter, which he considered as the most responsible act of the War Department while he was Secretary.

Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, each in turn passed its ordinance, based upon that of South Carolina. In all of these States the sentiment to take immediate advantage, without waiting for a new administration or its overtures, was strong and irresistible, and a proposal made in the Georgia convention for delay until the third of March was voted down.*

Following so nearly unanimous an expression in these first six States to dissolve the bonds of the old Federal Union, was the impulse to seize and appropriate the public property of the United States undefended and within easy reach. Forts, arsenals, the new custom-houses at Charleston and New Orleans upon which lavish sums had been so lately expended, the mint, too, at the Crescent city, with its large treasure of public money,—all these were occupied one after another, as within jurisdiction of the seceding State, and held without resistance. By February 1st the Mississippi was closed at its entrance essentially to the great tier of flourishing Northwestern States, and the general government maintained its authority along the seceding coast only at Forts Sumter and Pickens. Except for this latter stronghold, Pensacola was basely stripped of its defences by the men who should have guarded them. Some Southern officers of the navy mailed their resignations to Washington, and simultaneously led an attack of Florida troops upon the navy yard of that place. Commodore Armstrong basely surrendered at their demand; and, more basely still, Secretary Toucey, after receiving news of this surrender, accepted the resignations which had been forwarded to him, instead of dishonoring the officers who had thrown up the service with all the insult and parade they could muster.

January-
February.

January
13-15.

* The Florida convention met January 3; those respectively of Alabama and Mississippi, January 7; that of Georgia, January 16; and that of Louisiana, January 23. Mississippi passed the ordinance of secession on the 9th, by 84 to 15; Florida, on the 10th, by 62 to 7; Alabama, on the 11th, by 61 to 11; Georgia, on the 19th, by 208 to 89; Louisiana, on the 26th, by 113 to 17.

The War Department was managed differently. Texas, on the 1st of February, passed a secession ordinance,* subject to a vote of the people; and Major-General Twiggs, who commanded the United States troops in that department, soon proceeded to turn over the military property to the State authorities. Twiggs was one of the oldest

March 1. and most trusted officers of the service; and when the intelligence of this misconduct came to hand, his name was struck in disgrace from the army rolls.†

A crowning motive, no doubt, for the *status quo* arrangement was, on Buchanan's side, to stave off the shock of civil war until he was fairly out of office; while Davis and his associates were equally anxious that the new Southern Confederacy should take the military direction, and the delicate question of transferring the forts into its own keeping. As a makeweight might be thrown in the efforts, headed by Virginia, of which we shall presently speak, to make such terms for slavery as would preserve the Union longer. South Carolina had led off, at the time of her secession, in the effort to form a confederate government of slaveholding States; and to this consummation events speedily tended. Delegates from the six seceding States

February. met on the 4th of February at Montgomery, Alabama, in a "Southern Congress," over which Howell Cobb was chosen to preside. A constitution for the "provisional government of the Confederate States of America" was on the 8th of the month adopted, to continue for one year from the inauguration of a President, unless superseded sooner by the adoption of a permanent charter. The framework of this Confederacy, like the flag and other

* By 166 to 7. This ordinance provided that secession should not take effect until March.

† Secretary Toucey was censured by the House at this session for accepting the resignations of naval officers whose conduct was known to be traitorous. But Toucey followed the example of his chief, whose feeble politics for this emergency were his own.

emblems designed later, was patterned after that of the old Union, — thus showing that the attachment of American citizens was deeper rooted than they dared to own, — and originality found scarce a positive expression beyond making negro slavery the corner-stone of the new system. Slave States refusing this alliance were threatened with a loss of slave traffic. The new Congress was empowered to collect all taxes, duties, imports, and excises needful for revenue, all duties to be uniform throughout the Confederacy. And all matters, in fine, relating to public property and the public debt were to be adjusted "upon principles of right, justice, equity, and good faith" between the States leagued into this new membership "and their late confederates of the United States." Peaceable secession was the experiment proposed by the new Confederacy, against the precipitate zeal of South Carolina; and among its earliest acts of legislation was one which took into its own charge all questions with the United States relating to the occupation of forts and other public establishments.

On the same day that this provisional government was adopted, Jefferson Davis, whose brain had shaped out the new concert of States, was elected President, and Alexander H. Stephens Vice-President of the new Confederacy. Both were elected by a unanimous vote of the Congress; and on the 18th of February — the Vice-President having taken the oath a week earlier — Davis was inaugurated Chief Executive at Montgomery, delivering a calm address which flattered the idea that a confederacy of planters should stand disconnected from communities engaged in commerce and manufactures. His Cabinet was organized immediately after. This provisional government, as it styled itself, was in reality an oligarchy or military despotism. For the delegates to the Montgomery Congress derived their authority from conventions rather than the people of the seceding States; and, adopting a provisional framework and choosing a provisional Executive, these delegates took the leadership and actual incorporation of the Confederacy into their own hands in a monopolizing spirit. The Continental Congress of 1775 had used less

liberties with the people of the several States that they represented.*

Stephens, the Vice-President, assumed the responsibilities of confederate station in a very different temper from his high-spirited chieftain, having been chosen the more readily for his very reluctance. He stood for a type of Southern statesmen whose lingering love was for the Union, but who, against their clearest convictions of policy, were drawn into the vortex of secession by a certain fatalism and a sense of fidelity to Southern institutions. Out of politics from his own choice, and philosophizing at his "Liberty Hall" in a small and dilapidated Georgia town, with dogs and the young men he befriended to bear him company, this bachelor read the political signs with remarkable accuracy. He had regretted the Democratic schism at Charleston, and augured its evil consequences. South Carolina's secession and "declaration of causes" he looked upon as showing that no redress of grievances would pacify her. Poisoned, like most of his section, with the Calhoun heresy that a State had the right to secede, Stephens nevertheless believed that the only cause of complaint which the South had against the North was the personal liberty bills,—all other complaints being founded in threatened dangers which might never come. If there were abolitionists who would use a Republican victory against slave institutions, yet by wise counsels they could be kept back, as they had been in former years, and sound, constitutional men of the North would always be found to unite with the South to keep them in a minority. "The truth is," he wrote, "the South, almost to a man, has voted, I think, for every measure of general legislation that has passed both Houses and become law for the last ten years. Indeed, with but few exceptions, the South has controlled

* Stephens relates in 1862 that the provisional government had thought of him (but he refused) and of Toombs for President of the Confederate States, and that neither the Mississippi delegates nor Davis himself wished the honor as Congress assigned it; for Davis's ambition was, instead, to be commander-in-chief. Johnston's Life of A. H. Stephens, 390.

the government in its every important action from the beginning."*

Abraham Lincoln, who scanned well the situation from his distant home, was not unmindful of his old Whig friendships with Southern statesmen. Stephens, on the 14th of November, had made a remarkable speech at Millidgeville, which argued with great force that Lincoln's election was no sufficient cause for secession. Northern men, all too sanguine, thought for a time that this speech had given the quietus to secession in that quarter; though Stephens, with fatal inconsistency, approved in it the call for a State convention, and stood for a candidate. Procuring a revised copy of this speech, which was courteously transmitted, Lincoln inquired in a private letter,† "Do the people of the South really entertain fears that a Republican administration would, directly or indirectly, interfere with the slaves, or with them about the slaves? If they do, I wish to assure you, as once a friend, and still, I hope, not an enemy, that there is no cause for such fears. . . . I suppose, however, that does not meet the case. You think slavery is right and ought to be extended; while we think it is wrong and ought to be abolished." To this frank assurance and equally frank statement of the point of difference between the sections, Stephens replied ‡ with equal candor and personal friendliness. The South, he did not think, was apprehensive of actual interference, but its pride was touched at being placed under the ban of moral agitation.

It is, indeed, in vain that we plan with confidence that they who opposed will yield from motives of prudence and clear self-interest; forgetting that pride and passionate ambition force their way, when the blood is up, heedless of all intelligent restraint. Nothing was surer, as

* Johnston's A. H. Stephens, 375, 376.

† This letter was dated December 22, 1860, and Stephens never disclosed its existence until after President Lincoln's death. Johnston's Stephens, 371.

‡ December 30, 1860. Ibid.

events proved, than that slavery's strongest security lay in Northern forbearance and the respect which was felt by the free State majority for the fundaments of a written Constitution almost unalterable; it was this which sustained the power to oppress in the United States against the enlightenment of the age. Yet leaders, reckless as to drawing the sword of civil war, believed they could brave the world's opinion more sturdily alone; and followers, too proud to rest upon the guarantees that the Constitution gave them already, would listen to nothing unless the victorious surrendered the principles they had contended for to make those guarantees stronger. Such was the state of Southern feeling under which the "peace convention," so called, began its deliberations at Washington on the very

February 4-27. day that the Southern Confederate Congress at

Montgomery came together. Virginia instituted this convention with an honorable and beneficent purpose no doubt, but under an exaggerated impression of her own importance to either section, and of the influence she was capable of exerting in the impending crisis. Vain-glorious still, and practising her attitudes, she imagined herself the mediator of the whole Union, prescribing sacrifices which necessarily involved the surrender of the majority and the reversal of a popular verdict rendered at the polls. The general assembly of this State had coupled the national invitation with efforts, through special commissioners, to induce the seceding States on one side, and Buchanan's administration on the other, to abstain from all collision of arms while the convention remained in session. This meant, from a loyal point of view, that the rightful exercise of national authority must be suspended at a critical moment; and the President, in fact, demurring at such a responsibility on his part, shuffled it upon Congress, by submitting the Virginia resolutions to that body with his recommendation.* Congress had been energizing in its own way on the subject of sectional concessions, with little success, and it apprehended no more

* See President's message, January 28, 1861.

prosperous issue from an external body of delegates assembled to consult and interfere. Neither House referred the Virginia resolutions to a committee, nor even ordered them printed. The proposed convention was left to its own unsanctioned course, at the same time that the qualified truce at Charleston and Pensacola, of which we have spoken, was partly kept up to aid its deliberations.*

It was useless to expect much from such an assemblage at this time, though touched off with specious and glittering rhetoric about the glorious memories of the past. Virginia occupied no longer her proud historical position in the Union as in the earlier days, when strongest in numbers as well as the oldest. Not first of the old thirteen, but fifth among thirty-three, her statesmen had degenerated like the quality of her inhabitants; the old Dominion of Washington, Henry, and Jefferson, had far surpassed that of Mason, Wise, and Hunter. What course Virginia might take in the approaching struggle for national supremacy was certainly of great moment to the rest of the Union, and of infinitely greater moment to herself. But it was her local position on the outskirts of the slave section, and the influence which she might exert on the other border States, still in suspense like herself, which gave to her present action the chief importance. She afforded no assurance to the free States that any measures she might originate would bring back the seceding States, and in point of fact no one of those States was represented at this conference. Nor did the central figure of this peace movement and convention, John Tyler, contribute strength, in the estimation of cool citizens of the North, who had, what masses of the people so rarely possess, a memory, and the conviction joined to it that character once formed seldom changes. That peace convention was a Tyler emanation; and the fickle ex-President, in proposing the plan, kept in view, as he had done in all plans, the gain of the section to which he was partial.†

* See page 487.

† See 2 Tyler's Tylers, 579. The programme which Tyler announced

Tyler, as a matter of course, was chosen to preside over this convention ; and with his cunning, tact, and suavity, he manipulated the Union sentiment about him, while he kept prying and mousing to prevent the national defences from being strengthened in any direction.* The improvised Congress sat with closed doors, like its continental prototype, seven Southern and thirteen Northern States being represented in it, and border delegates, such as Guthrie, of Kentucky, taking the laboring oar. Sessions were held in the hall adjoining Willard's hotel. Chase, of Ohio, firm and unyielding, was the strongest exponent of Republican sentiment in that body ; and from Massachusetts and some other States came delegates of the same uncompromising description. On the 27th of February the bare majority agreed upon a "plan of adjustment," which involved principles about the same as had been already pending before Congress in the Crittenden efforts, of which we shall speak presently. But with no clear approach to unanimity, nothing was likely to avail ; "the Constitution must be maintained as it is," was the only alternative to which Republican delegates would commit themselves. All efforts to prejudice their position, whether to let Southern States go or to coerce them into submission, were in vain. Although the work of this secret body was still to be passed upon by Congress, Tyler came immediately back to Virginia, and on the steps of a Richmond hotel, the

in an open letter of January 17th embraced these alternatives as the result of such a convention : (1) to incorporate a new agreement into the present Constitution, or else (2) for the South to take the Constitution, with such changes as pleased slavery, and to reconstruct the Union by drawing other States into it. To this programme he adhered.

* See Tyler's *Tylers*, c. 20 ; 2 Curtis's *Buchanan*. Tyler is seen trying first to get Major Anderson's garrison withdrawn from Fort Sumter ; this failing, he gently and diplomatically assists the *status quo*, and advises the Montgomery government to send on commissioners to treat for public property and forts. He objected to having guns placed in Fortress Monroe, and to the troops which by February began to arrive for the defence of the capital.

The Virginia delegates in this convention tried in vain to have some declaration made against State coercion.

very next day, he repudiated all efforts to preserve the Union as vain and impracticable. Nothing remained, he said, but for Virginia to act quickly and secede in the exercise of her sovereignty ; and in such a frame of mind he entered the State convention to spur on his commonwealth to disloyalty.* Tyler's veneer of Unionism, supposing it genuine, was of the thinnest possible description.

The members of the Peace Conference found opportunity to make a formal call upon Abraham Lincoln before their sessions were ended ; and his jocular comments upon the height and size of those who were introduced to him, by which he parried all dissertations upon the state of the Union, were a new source of disgust to those polished patricians who, like Tyler, could see in the coming man only one of their mean white trash and a renegade.† Leaving his Illinois home and his neighbors on the 11th of February, the President-elect travelled towards Washington by way of Indianapolis, Pittsburg, Cleveland, Buffalo, Albany, New York, and Philadelphia. His brief speeches upon the journey gave no explicit statement of the policy he proposed to pursue, beyond the general affirmation that he meant to be just to every section, and at the same time to preserve the Union. At Philadelphia, on the ^{February} Washington's birthday celebration, he hoisted the stars and stripes over the old Hall of Independence in presence of a large concourse. "There will be no blood shed," said he, "unless it be forced upon the government, and then it will be compelled to act in self-defence." After this last striking utterance of his journey, he proceeded to Harrisburg, where he arrived the same afternoon, having arranged to proceed the next day to Baltimore. But being informed that plots were laid in the latter city to prevent his inauguration, and that his life was in danger, he yielded to advice from high quarters, and, changing his programme, returned secretly after dark to Philadelphia, whence his sleeping-car, attached to the mid-

* 2 Tyler's Tylers, c. 21.

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† 2 Ib. 615.

night express train, was borne safely to Washington, where, to the surprise of the country and the relief of all loyal people, Lincoln arrived at early dawn of the 23d, Seward and a confidential friend meeting him at the depot.*

The count by Congress of the electoral votes had already come peaceably off on the 13th of February; and contrary to the wild rumors of the winter that disunion would force its issue upon technical formalities, the two Houses met, after the usual mode, tellers counted the votes, and Breckinridge, the Vice-President, calmly announced the result. The formal title of the Republican candidates to the two chief offices was complete and undisputed.†

What wild ideas had chased one another at the capital this winter, — alarms of violence, and inventions to avert it. Plots and conspiracies were rife to seize the capital, prevent an inauguration, and hold the public buildings and treasure in trust for secession; Baltimore and Richmond were the chief headquarters of such schemes, but Lincoln's arrival, and the careful military preparations of General Scott, whose troops were coming in through February, made conspirators afraid. Washington and its departments were full of men drawing their support from the government, who were in active sympathy and communication

* For important and interesting narratives of this unexpected night journey, see 2 Seward's Life, c. 54; 35 Century Magazine, 268, and citations; S. M. Felton's statement in Schouler's Massachusetts in the Civil War, 59. The note of warning from General Scott and Senator Seward was borne to Philadelphia by the latter's son, Frederick W. Seward, who found Lincoln already apprised of his danger from another source. Cars at this time were drawn by horses across the city of Baltimore, and the danger incurred by those who had to make their way from one depot to another through the streets of a populous quarter was shown by the experience of the 6th Massachusetts Volunteers in the following April. To say nothing of plots for capturing the President-elect, preventing his inauguration, and perhaps assassination, there was serious danger, at a time of intense political excitement like this, from the rough and unruly elements of a Baltimore mob. Lincoln's life at such a time was too valuable to the Union for him to put it in needless jeopardy, after warnings so serious had reached him.

† Congressional Globe.

with the secessionists. Strange proposals, too, were made for pacifying. One was that Lincoln and Hamlin should resign and let conservatives fill their places; another, more reasonable, that the new President should take Crittenden, Bell, Everett, and others of that stamp, to dominate in his cabinet.* It was felt, now that the cotton States had gone, that every effort should be made to retain those of the slave border; yet when it came to discussing terms of conciliation, progress was found impossible.

Amid all speculations the great body of our loyal people waited for statesmen to work out some heroic escape from the danger; slow, like every community, to recognize that the only remedy lay with themselves. While the South armed for defence, the North bought scarce a musket, and realized little that a deadly strife was approaching. Even in Free-Soil Massachusetts, where the philanthropic John A. Andrew gained in January the governor's chair, wise foresight was widely ridiculed as folly by men of his own party, when he placed the militia on a footing to meet the coming emergency of civil war.†

Lincoln had been engaged in making up his cabinet, and while disposed to strengthen it, as he might, from the border States, he chose the two recognized leaders of the Republican party, Seward and Chase, for the chief posts. The former, whom he honored above all others of his disappointed rivals, had accepted the premiership, and gave his whole efforts in Congress to making the way smooth for the entrance of the new administration. The latter, uncertain whether to exchange the senatorship which awaited him for a cabinet position, was needlessly fearful that Seward, and the new President as well, would consent to some new compromise, like that which Crittenden proposed, for restoring the line of the Missouri compromise. In this fear he wrote Seward anxiously, upon learning that the latter was to make a speech in January in the Senate

* See, in 2 J. J. Crittenden, 219, General Scott's letter in favor of such a course.

† Schouler's Massachusetts in the Civil War, c. 1.

chamber.* Chase's stern motto for the times was, "inauguration first, adjustment afterwards." But Seward, ^{January} with his hopeful, optimistic spirit, willing to soothe the enmities of brethren by every means short of a sacrifice of principle, believed much in kind and fraternal exhortation at this critical season. Both he and his chief political friends felt the need of something different in their triumphant party from "brandishing the lance and shouting for war."† And less inclined to the radical abolitionists, who were the old enemies of the Whigs, they desired the Northern people to keep clearly in the right, so that when the shock came it would be said that rebellion was without excuse; and so, too, as to draw over and gain the whole conservative Union element in the North, Democrats included, whose diversion would be essential to ultimate success.

But Seward was not for moral concessions to the South such as he had consistently opposed all his life. "There is no fear of any compromise of principle or advantage of freedom," he wrote home. "If there is such a one, which I do not expect, I shall be no party to it."‡ Furthermore, as he pointed out to friends who inclined to the plans of an immediate convention, there was no possible opportunity to put the slow machinery of constitutional amendment in operation in season to arrest the Southern secession; no amendment satisfactory to the South could gain two thirds of both Houses, nor could Congress initiate a general convention. But the suggestion for a convention some years hence, when the storm had subsided, he thought might have a good effect on the border States; and, above all, he believed that political opponents should be met with a disposition, not sullen and silent as the last year, but respectful and fraternizing,—rallying the whole people round the flag, and pointing to union and harmony as the omens for the hour.§

* Schmucker's Chase, 202.

† See 2 Weed's Memoirs, c. 22.

‡ 2 Seward's Life, 488, 489.

§ 2 Seward's Life, c. 52.

An eloquent speech on the 12th of January — far different from any other of this important session from Republicans, save that of his colleague, Charles Francis Adams, in the House — was the fruit of these convictions. The new Senate chamber was crowded to suffocation to hear him; Southern men listened intensely, and hundreds came over from Baltimore to swell the audience. Crittenden, who sat immediately before him, was so overcome at portions of the speech that he bowed his white head and wept. Seward made adherence to the Union the strongest duty of the hour. We could not save it by mutual recriminations, nor by compromises, nor by "some cunning and insincere compact of pacification;" dissolution was "for the people of this country perpetual civil war;" "freedom would be saved with the Union, and could not be saved without it." There were many at this time at the North,* not among the abolitionists alone, but among trusted journalists and leaders of the Republican cause, who had already been counselling that it was better to let the slave States secede and prove their own incapacity to stand alone. Seward's efforts aided in arresting this tendency and turning the loyal public mind to the impressive fact that the question of slavery extension ended with the election of 1860, and that the inevitable issue must now be the salvation of the Union under that change of condition.

That same spirit of kindness and conciliation — the same which Lincoln adopted, a few weeks after, in as beautiful and touching an inaugural address as ever was penned — was all that the incoming administration could substantially offer to solve the present troubles. Chase was right in his view of the situation, so far as legal conclusions went; but Seward, neither bold nor defiant, who pushed concession to the verge, not forgetting that he was a Republican, showed the better temper for uniting the loyal resources, all needful for the impending struggle. A colloquy arising in the Senate, in which he was charged with recommending "battle and bloodshed to restore the Union,"

* 2 Seward's Life, c. 52.

he responded, "not to restore, but to preserve." It was that same magnanimous and forbearing temper — with malice towards none, with charity for all — by which Lincoln afterwards carried the people from stage to stage of a gigantic conflict, until it culminated in successful revolution.

These last three months were swelling ones, every day crowded with life and speculation. The chasm of disunion widened more and more, and loyal people of the North were praying Congress to find some way, they knew not how, of closing it. Northern agitators were hateful to the sight; radical meetings to celebrate the anniversary of John Brown's death were violently suppressed; in Union gatherings the State legislature was invoked to repeal the personal liberty act, which the South had alleged as its most palpable grievance. Some fourteen Northern States were liable to the complaint of passing such obnoxious acts.* Rhode Island repealed; and could repeat have saved the Union, it might, in many other of our Northern legislatures at least, have been carried, for moderate Republicans favored the idea.† But events moved rapidly, and it was soon seen that the frenzy of secession could not be arrested by any such exhibition of generosity.‡ It was the spirit of moral disapprobation which had generated these personal liberty enactments that rankled in the Southern heart more deeply than the legislation itself.

The time approached which brought the triumphant Re-

* According to the address which accompanied South Carolina's ordinance of secession, the States which had passed personal liberty acts were all of New England, New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Iowa.

† Banks, the retiring Executive of Massachusetts, who, after a prosperous and influential career, was about to remove to Illinois to accept a lucrative situation as railway manager, set the novel example of making a valedictory address to the legislature, to urge such a repeal. But Andrew, his successor, took contrary ground.

‡ Stephens himself, who had made the most of this grievance in his speeches, replied to Northern correspondents who proposed taking such a step that it was too late. Stephens's Life, 370.

publicans close to the consummation of their victory. A solemn fast, proclaimed by the President, had been generally observed on the 4th of January by the free and border slave States, but disregarded at the far South. Our final interest centres in the legislation of this short session of Congress. Decimated, in the Senate more especially, by the withdrawal of Southern members who left to join the fortunes of their several States, the two Houses drew into better accord for asserting the principles which had prevailed at the polls. Besides suspending the postal service in seceding States, three important steps were taken in legislation. *First*, Kansas was admitted to the Union under its free constitution formed at Wyandotte. The bill had passed the House at the former session, and the Senate's delay to concur had justified the Republicans, most of all, during the late Presidential canvass, in maintaining their territorial issue as a vital one. There was, therefore, a certain dramatic justice in the final spectacle, when on the 21st of January, just after the Senators of Florida, Alabama, and Mississippi, with Jefferson Davis at the head, had announced the secession of their States and their own retirement from that body, Seward called up the slumbering bill for the admission of Kansas, and it passed after none but the feeblest resistance.* President Buchanan signed the bill without delay, † and the flag which Lincoln raised over Independence Hall at Philadelphia ‡ contained a thirty-fourth star. *Second*, a new tariff act increased the scale of duties generally from five to ten per cent, and pleased Pennsylvania. But that increase was mainly for restoring confidence to our desperate finances. Already had a loan of twenty-five millions been sanctioned, to relieve the wants of the Treasury; § and the new tariff blended with its enhanced scale of duties a loan of ten millions more,

* It passed by 36 to 16, and the House on the 28th of January concurred in amendments.

† Act January 29, 1861, c. 20.

‡ *Supra*, p. 497.

§ Act February 28, 1861, c. 29.

which needed the pledge of additional revenue to induce investment.* *Third*, new territories were organized under various acts passed toward the close of the session, and Colorado, Nevada, and Dakota, were added to the regions already organized for future States. Not a phrase appeared in these enactments restrictive of the free energy which reached out to occupy the new regions of the sunset; Congress assumed its own functions of supervision, and the Douglas dogma of option to be admitted "with or without slavery" was quietly dropped.†

But that which this session was chiefly leaned upon to accomplish went quite unperformed. Attempts to stay disunion, whether by new concessions or by enforcing vigorously the national supremacy, were negative and nerveless. Congress was all at sea, and the two Houses divided. Utter distrust of the President conduced to such a result; for though Buchanan by January had stated to the legislature with some coherency the true alternative, yet the doleful and despairing tone of his recommendations, and his quibbling demurrer besides, over the right to coerce a State, were deadening to all energetic accumulation of force. No legislature will readily invest an Executive with full powers for forcible suppression who doubts his own strength and the resources which government can confide to him, and who quails before rebellious opposition.

Buchanan's opening message had discoursed as though the only hope of saving the Union lay in pursuing the South with new guarantees.‡ The patriotic Crittenden lent the last efforts of an honorable life to patching up a

* Act March 2, 1861, c. 68. See also Joint Resolution 15 of same date.

† Thirst for the precious metals, in two at least of these territories was the chief incentive to population. Colorado included parts of Kansas, Nebraska, and Eastern Utah, and the then famous mining region of Pike's Peak, cut off by deserts from the more fertile States, was comprised.

‡ 2 Curtis's Buchanan, 419, contends that there was all the more reason for Congress to adopt the President's pacifying suggestions because the United States government was wholly unprepared for civil war.

new plan under which slavery and freedom might work out their ambitions together. A Senate committee of thirteen, composed of men of different sections and politics, considered this plan together, which drew the ^{1860,} general gaze of the country as the "Crittenden ^{December.} compromise." Crittenden, who was one of the committee, submitted the scheme to his colleagues on the 22d of December. It offered guarantees against the arbitrary abolition by Congress of slavery in slave States, or in places once lying within such limits, such as forts, navy yards, and the five miles square of the capital, over which the United States gained exclusive jurisdiction; it restrained Federal interference with the inter-State transportation of slaves; it bound the United States to afford recompense for the value of fugitive slaves where local violence prevented their return; and it earnestly advised the offending States of the North to repeal severally their personal liberty acts. But its main feature consisted in an attempt to restore by like constitutional amendment the Missouri compromise line, so as to run the parallel of $36^{\circ} 30'$ across the continent as a permanent barrier of territorial demarcation.* Efforts were made through friends of the outgoing administration to get the President-elect to accede to such a compromise; but Lincoln, while signifying how far he would go, to Seward of this committee, was wary of committing his views through any Democratic channel.† With unerring sagacity, moreover, he laid his finger upon the weak spot of the proposed extension of the parallel,—that of leaving slavery propagandism still to ferment in Cuba, Mexico, and the region of the isthmus. "I am for no compromise," he wrote in confidence, "which asserts or permits the extension of the institution in soil owned by the nation. And any trick by which the nation is to acquire territory and

* See 2 Coleman's Crittenden, c 13, and the various qualifications under which Everett, Winthrop, and various other statesmen of the day, not in actual service, indorsed the plan.

† See 2 Curtis's Life of Buchanan, 426, making mention of Duff Green's fruitless mission.

then allow some local authority to spread slavery over it is as noxious as any other." * "I take it," he adds, "that to effect some such result as this and put us again on the high road to a slave empire, is the object of all these proposed compromises." But as to fugitive slaves, slavery at the capital, traffic among slave States and whatever else sprung of necessity from the fact that slavery was already among us, he cared but little, so that what might be done were comely and not outrageous. †

In the committee of thirteen not only were all propositions looking to a better guarantee on freedom's side set aside, but the vital points of the Crittenden compromise were voted down by Davis, Toombs, and the other secession members, as well as by Republicans. Brought forward, moreover, before any fort or government property had been seized, and when no State but South Carolina had seceded, the rapid progress of rebellion and robbery, and the refusal of cotton State leaders to pledge their acquiescence, caused the plan to fail, as perhaps it

1861, must inevitably have done. Defeated in the January committee, and by a test vote in the Senate, Crittenden made various efforts to get his scheme in some way submitted to a direct vote of the people; ‡ and February, finally laid hold of the "Peace Conference" plan, March near the close of the session as a substitute for his own. That plan improved upon his proposed restoration of the Missouri line by placing a strong limitation upon further national expansion. But this, after all, bore but a majority indorsement from the convention which presented it; men of the border States turned wistfully back to Crittenden's original proposal in preference; and while Northern men felt indifferent to the whole scheme, as they perceived no hope that the cotton States could be won back by it, Congress in the last emergency withheld its

* Letter to Seward, 2 Seward's Life, 504.

† Ib.

‡ 2 Curtis's Buchanan, 431. All this would have been ineffectual as a means of amendment to the Constitution, unless sanctioned by two-thirds of both Houses.

aid and countenance.* "No compromise with disloyal slaveholders," was the final result of negation; and all the discussion of these months of writhing suspense served only to bridge a deep and dangerous interval.†

One proposed amendment, and only one, was sent out with the constitutional assent of the two Houses, not, however, as a compromise, but a pledge. It originated in the Representatives' branch,‡ and provided that no amendment should be made to the Constitution, authorizing Congress to abolish or interfere within any State with the domestic institution of slavery. In the present sentiment of the country, Republicans, Democrats, and the great mass of loyal citizens at the North, were willing to be bound by such an assurance, hand and foot if need be, in proof that they meant no aggression. But the tide of events which soon followed was irresistible, and the States never acted upon the proposition. Congress had proposed no amendment by its two-thirds vote for nearly three score years; and, curious to relate, the very next which it sent forth made, under God's providence, a rule precisely opposite; which latter amendment, instead, was perfected by the States and planked into the fundamental law.§

We were now on the verge of a terrible civil conflict, costly and sanguinary as the world ever knew. Private citizens, in many instances, saw its approach more clearly than did statesmen long experienced in public life.|| Thirty-

* Jefferson Davis, the President-elect of the Southern Confederacy, while on his way to Montgomery to be inaugurated, made a speech, February 17, in which he said: "If other States join our confederation, they can freely come in on our terms. Our separation from the old Union is complete. No compromise, no reconstruction can now be entertained."

† Congressional Globe.

‡ Here it passed by 133 to 65. A similar proposal had been agreed to by the Senate committee of thirteen. The Senate adopted by 24 to 12.

§ See Article XIII. of amendments (1865).

|| See, e. g., letter of Amos A. Lawrence, of Massachusetts, December 29, 1860. "The first blow struck by any State or local authority at the United States government will arouse and unite the whole Northern people. Partisan faults will be forgotten, and no retroactive legislation can be accomplished." 2 Coleman's Crittenden, 240.

one millions of inhabitants, bristling geographically on two sides in hostile array, — more than ten times the whole number that had withstood the mother country in the first struggle for American independence, — was a spectacle for the world to contemplate with amazement. Events hurried to the climax of arms before either side was well aware of it. In the free States more especially, so strong had grown the habit of belief in the perpetuity of the Union that men clung tenaciously to the idea that political craft would span the situation as it had often done before; that negotiation, honorable or dishonorable, some new bundle of mutual concessions, would bolster up the old league of social systems. Not until the rash cannon of South Carolina thundered at Fort Sumter was that illusory hope dispelled; and when the defenders of the Union and the avengers of the insulted starry banner sprang to arms, each party to the conflict found foemen worthy of his steel. What splendid prowess of victory, could those ranks have been seen reuniting to march all one way against a common foe. And with such a spirit of deadly earnest in the strife, it was inevitable that they who had invited it, weakened and handicapped by the very system of bondage they had plunged into secession with the foolish hope of preserving, should bite the dust. Numbers, resources, ingenuity, the opinion of the civilized world, were all against them.* And yet the responsibilities of the Union cause at the time when the first Republican President came to assume them must have been appalling. Seven slave States, including Texas, had gone through the form of secession; Arkansas and North Carolina were soon to follow, and Virginia ultimately; and not without internal bitterness and fratricide were Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Missouri rescued at the perilous brink.

* To take the census of 1860, even supposing all the slave States had resisted all the free States, — thus making the conflict purely geographical, which it never became, — the disparity in population would have stood about twelve millions to nineteen; and that, too, reckoning slaves, who were really an incumbrance, as part of the efficient strength.

"Conspiracy," "treason," were names at first applied, all too narrowly, to those who struggled to break from the Union. "Rebellion" is a more enduring and appropriate word; but to a strife of such gigantic proportions the law has been compelled to concede so many belligerent privileges that the status, as time goes on, will be recognized, more and more, as that of a "civil war." We must divest ourselves of the false impression that the crime of a few Southern leaders produced the real mischief. Plunderers, treacherous abusers, like Floyd, Thompson, and Twiggs, of the power confided in them, must ever be execrated by all who respect honor and principle; but they who led the cotton States into rebellion felt a strong public opinion behind them, and led in what among their own constituents was a popular cause. To be sure, they passed from conventions to a provisional confederacy with little of what, in the purest American sense, seemed like a submission to the popular vote. That, however, was in pursuance of class and oligarchical political methods to which the slave section of the country had been well accustomed. Among these earlier seceding States, at least, which bore with enthusiasm the standard of slavery propagandism, misconception, false education, and the habits of life which a slave system fosters, made the cause of their new revolution a popular one. Men rallied here to destroy the Union as readily as at the North to uphold it; and that latent loyalty, upon which our government reckoned in the early days of the war to produce a counter-revolution proved always a fallacious hope. The philosophy of Southern statesmanship was, in truth, poisoned and vitiated at its source by the sophistries of the great Calhoun, that pure-minded man of dual character, devoted in his last years to the experiment which now bore fruit, whose strong feelings set him to some resolute purpose, for which his subtle and ingenious mind worked out the logical reasons. The harm diffused thus throughout the South was that not uncommon one of taking false maxims for first principles. Secession and slavery became thus abstractly right; the economics of slave labor, the potent forces which must

rule the world ; loyalty to the State and to the slave system took priority of loyalty to the Union ; and for years dreams of ambition and cupidity had drawn this people, insensibly onward to the precipice of disunion. And thus the new Confederacy, which leaders now struck to establish, was but the attempted realization of visions long indulged. The majority of States and of the American people had been trained differently.

Some have thought that Davis and his compeers of the Montgomery Congress hoped still for concessions from the North which would save the Union, after the manner of former compromises. Facts do not justify altogether this favorable view, though many, no doubt, cherished that belief for a time in States, like Virginia, which long wavered. South Carolina was confident, self-sufficient ; and among the bold and buoyant spirits who set rebellion in motion, the real belief appears rather to have been that they would yet dictate terms, and reconstruct the old Union upon their new basis. But what they reckoned upon, with even more fatuous confidence, was the cowardly inertness of the free States. They anticipated no war which would draw out the whole resources of the Union against them ; they expected, at the least, to be let alone ; left to secede in peace, and to arrange some division of the common debts and property. The North, on its own part, failed to understand the South ; here it was too commonly believed that slaveholders would bluster and come back again, as they had done before ; that in a strife so unequal they would not fight. This rebellion had been ripening ever since slavery became a growing force in our Union, partaking of the national spirit of expansion. And because slavery and freedom were both expanding and enduring forces in these days, the collision, which compromise had but temporarily postponed, was sooner or later inevitable. No people surely, on either side, ever shouldered the musket to sustain a cause with more faithfulness to ideas, stronger convictions of public duty, than did the Southern and the Northern in the present struggle ; the one devoted to his State, the other to the Union ;

and the progress of the civil strife gave, too, to moral agitators their share in the glory of results. For, under the circumstances, nothing but the appeal to rally round the flag and preserve the public property, the Constitution, and the laws, could have united the loyal people to the northward, irrespective of past party ties, in so splendid a demonstration. And nothing, moreover, as events went on, but the downfall and destruction of that whole pernicious system which was at the root of all the great troubles of the century, and obstructed the destiny and growth of the American people in homogeneous grandeur, would have made the Union worth sustaining through the long, costly, and calamitous strife, or kept the North constant to bear it through.

Washington at this time wore the aspect of a beleaguered city. Thanks to the energy and foresight of General Scott, and the Cabinet coterie which saved Buchanan from ignominious shame, there were now over six hundred troops stationed at the national capital, exclusive of marines at the navy yard, to preserve order and peace at the coming inauguration.*

March.

There was trepidation and excitement in this city,—the whole aspect of its society rapidly changing already by the exodus of the Southern, now disloyal element, which had given it character. Slovenly and threadbare still, this only child of the nation gained yet something in attractiveness before colossal events were to make the city historical. A grand aqueduct, with water supply from the falls of the Potomac, was among the greatest of its more recent enterprises. Still stood the familiar White House upon the executive reservation at the west end, with three drab buildings of brick, which housed the State department on one side, and the war and the navy on the other; but the granite extensions of the treasury, superadding noble fronts at north and south to the old sandstone colonnade, prom-

* See President's special message, March 2, 1861; 2 Curtis's Buchanan, c. 25.

ised a more imposing architecture. Down on the flats of the Potomac was seen the marble shaft of the monument to Washington, long to remain unfinished, now that the older sentiment of personal veneration failed for a sectional cement. On yonder beautiful heights of Capitol Hill spread out the white, unfolded wings of the national legislature like an eagle on its perpetual perch ; but the grand central dome was as yet but partially completed, and its full spans of glass and iron were wanting. It was long before that central dome was finished ; longer, far longer, before the disused derrick upon that Washington obelisk was to give place that earnest work might carry its shaft to the clouds. But regeneration preceded harmony ; and when that dome was completed, and the great bronze statue of liberty, already designed for it, had been placed in position at its apex, a brighter and broader horizon was swept by the vision. That metal figure emblematised a spirit which, often and often invoked in the temple below with the grandest, richest eloquence of which man is capable, had never gazed before with so real a meaning at the eastern sun.

APPENDIX.

A. ELECTORAL VOTE BY STATES FOR PRESIDENT AND VICE-PRESIDENT, 1847-1861.

STATES.		ELECTORAL VOTE OF 1848.				
		PRESIDENT.		VICE-PRESIDENT.		Total.
		Zachary Taylor, of La.	Lewis Cass, of Mich.	Millard Fillmore, of N. Y.	W. O. Butler, of Ky.	
1	Alabama		9		9	9
2	Arkansas.....		3		3	3
3	Connecticut	6		6		6
4	Delaware	3		3		3
5	Florida	3		3		3
6	Georgia	10		10		10
7	Illinois.....		9		9	9
8	Indiana		12		12	12
9	Iowa		4		4	4
10	Kentucky	12		12		12
11	Louisiana	6		6		6
12	Maine		9		9	9
13	Maryland	8		8		8
14	Massachusetts	12		12		12
15	Michigan.....		5		5	5
16	Mississippi		6		6	6
17	Missouri		7		7	7
18	New Hampshire		6		6	6
19	New Jersey.....	7		7		7
20	New York	36		36		36
21	North Carolina	11		11		11
22	Ohio		23		23	23
23	Pennsylvania	26		26		26
24	Rhode Island	4		4		4
25	South Carolina		9		9	9
26	Tennessee	13		13		13
27	Texas		4		4	4
28	Vermont	6		6		6
29	Virginia		17		17	17
30	Wisconsin		4		4	4
Total.....		163	127	163	127	290

ELECTORAL VOTE OF 1852.

STATES.		PRESIDENT.	VICE-PRESIDENT.	Total
		Franklin Pierce, of N. H.	W. R. King, of Ala.	W. A. Graham, of N. C.
1	Alabama	9	9	9
2	Arkansas	4	4	4
3	California	4	4	4
4	Connecticut	6	6	6
5	Delaware	3	3	3
6	Florida	3	3	3
7	Georgia	10	10	10
8	Illinois	11	11	11
9	Indiana	13	13	13
10	Iowa	4	4	4
11	Kentucky	12	12	12
12	Louisiana	6	6	6
13	Maine	8	8	8
14	Maryland	8	8	8
15	Massachusetts	13	13	13
16	Michigan	6	6	6
17	Mississippi	7	7	7
18	Missouri	9	9	9
19	New Hampshire	5	5	5
20	New Jersey	7	7	7
21	New York	35	35	35
22	North Carolina	10	10	10
23	Ohio	23	23	23
24	Pennsylvania	27	27	27
25	Rhode Island	4	4	4
26	South Carolina	8	8	8
27	Tennessee	12	12	12
28	Texas	4	4	4
29	Vermont	5	5	5
30	Virginia	15	15	15
31	Wisconsin	5	5	5
Total.....		254	42	296

ELECTORAL VOTE OF 1856.

	STATES.	PRESIDENT.			VICE-PRESIDENT.			Total.
		J. Buchanan, of Penn.	J. C. Fremont, of Cal.	M. Fillmore, of N. Y.	J. C. Breckin- ridge, of Ky.	W. L. Dayton, of N. J.	A. J. Donelson, of Tenn.	
1	Alabama	9			9			9
2	Arkansas	4			4			4
3	California	6			6			6
4	Connecticut							6
5	Delaware	3			3			3
6	Florida	3			3			3
7	Georgia	10			10			10
8	Illinois	11			11			11
9	Indiana	13			13			13
10	Iowa	4			4			4
11	Kentucky	12			12			12
12	Louisiana	6			6			6
13	Maine	8		8		8		8
14	Maryland					8		8
15	Massachusetts	13			13			13
16	Michigan	6			6			6
17	Mississippi	7			7			7
18	Missouri	9			9			9
19	New Hampshire		5			5		5
20	New Jersey	7			7			7
21	New York		35			35		35
22	North Carolina	10			10			10
23	Ohio		23			23		23
24	Pennsylvania	27			27			27
25	Rhode Island		4			4		4
26	South Carolina	8			8			8
27	Tennessee		12			12		12
28	Texas	4			4			4
29	Vermont		5			5		5
30	Virginia	15			15			15
31	Wisconsin		5			5		5
	Total	174	114	8	174	114	8	296

ELECTORAL VOTE OF 1860.

	STATES.	PRESIDENT.			VICE-PRESIDENT.			Total.		
		A. Lincoln, of Ill.	J. C. Breckinridge, of Ky.	John Bell, of Tenn.	S. A. Douglas, of Ill.	H. Hamlin, of Maine.	Joseph Lane, of Oregon.	Edward Everett, of Mass.		
1	Alabama.....	9					9		9	
2	Arkansas.....	4					4		4	
3	California.....	4					4		4	
4	Connecticut.....	6					6		6	
5	Delaware.....	3					3		3	
6	Florida.....	3					3		3	
7	Georgia.....	10					10		10	
8	Illinois.....	11					11		11	
9	Indiana.....	13					13		13	
10	Iowa.....	4					4		4	
11	Kentucky.....		12				12		12	
12	Louisiana.....	6					6		6	
13	Maine.....	8					8		8	
14	Maryland.....	8					8		8	
15	Massachusetts.....	13					13		13	
16	Michigan.....	5					6		6	
17	Minnesota.....	4					4		4	
18	Mississippi.....		7				7		7	
19	Missouri.....				9			9	9	
20	New Hampshire.....	5					5		5	
21	New Jersey.....	4					4		7	
22	New York.....	35					35		35	
23	North Carolina.....		10				10		10	
24	Ohio.....	23					23		23	
25	Oregon.....	3					3		3	
26	Pennsylvania.....	27					27		27	
27	Rhode Island.....	4					4		4	
28	South Carolina.....		8				8		8	
29	Tennessee.....			12				12	12	
30	Texas.....		4				4		4	
31	Vermont.....	5					5		5	
32	Virginia.....			15				15	15	
33	Wisconsin.....	5					5		5	
	Total.....	180	72	39	12	180	72	39	12	303

B. LENGTH OF SESSIONS OF CONGRESS,
1847-1861.

NO. OF CONGRESS.	NO. OF SESSION.	TIME OF SESSION.
30th.	{ 1st. 2d.	December 6th, 1847—August 14th, 1848. December 4th, 1848—March 3d, 1849.
31st.	{ 1st. 2d.	December 3d, 1849—September 30th, 1850. December 2d, 1850—March 3d, 1851.
32d.	{ 1st. 2d.	December 1st, 1851—August 31st, 1852. December 6th, 1852—March 3d, 1853.
33d.	{ 1st. 2d.	December 5th, 1853—August 7th, 1854. December 4th, 1854—March 3d, 1855.
34th.	{ 1st. 2d. 3d.	December 3d, 1855—August 18th, 1856. August 21st, 1856—August 30th, 1856. December 1st, 1856—March 3d, 1857.
35th.	{ 1st. 2d.	December 7th, 1857—June 1st, 1858. December 6th, 1858—March 3d, 1859.
36th.	{ 1st. 2d.	December 5th, 1859—June 25th, 1860. December 3d, 1860—March 4th, 1861.

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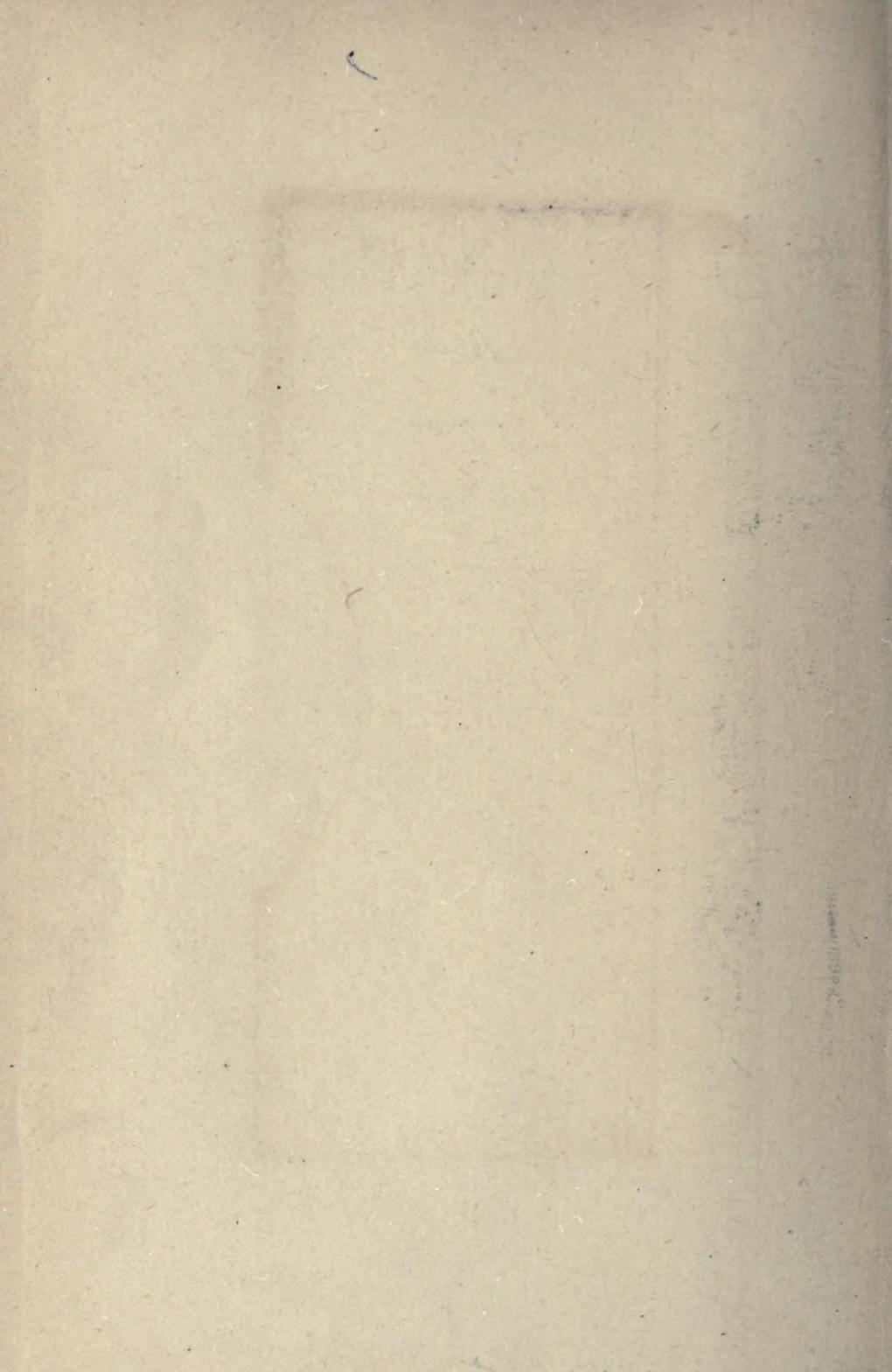
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